

Fort Hays State University

FHSU Scholars Repository

Master's Theses

Graduate School

Spring 1953

The Economic Development of Ness County, Kansas

John Wesley

Fort Hays Kansas State College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Accounting Commons](#), and the [Finance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wesley, John, "The Economic Development of Ness County, Kansas" (1953). *Master's Theses*. 523.
<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses/523>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NESS COUNTY, KANSAS

being

A thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science

by

John R. Wesley, B. S.

Kansas State College

Date July 23, 1953

Approved

Louise H. Thompson
Major Professor

Ralph E. Coder
Chairman Graduate Council

A hand-drawn map of the Fort Worth area, showing the intersection of major highways (I-75, I-20, I-35, I-40) and the locations of various cities and towns. The map is divided into sections labeled with names like OHIO, NEVADA, WARING, EDEN, CENTER, BAZINE, JOHNSON, FRANKLIN, and HIGHPOINT. Key locations marked include UTICA, RANSOM, BROWNELL, BEELER, NEE CITY, and BAZINE. The map also shows the North Fork and South Fork of the River, and the Walnut Creek and Pawnee Creek.

DEDICATION

To My Son

John Keith Wesley

James Earl Ray, born May 19, 1928, in Jackson, Mississippi, was a member of the National Socialist Party and the Ku Klux Klan. He was convicted of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1969 and sentenced to 99 years in prison. He was paroled in 1991 and fled to London, where he lived until his death in 1997.

James Earl Ray, born May 19, 1928, in Jackson, Mississippi, was a member of the National Socialist Party and the Ku Klux Klan. He was convicted of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1969 and sentenced to 99 years in prison. He was paroled in 1991 and fled to London, where he lived until his death in 1997.

PREFACE

The old, crumbling stone buildings at Ness City bring to mind the many stories and legends of the Old West. Stories of gun fights, of range wars, of savage Indians, and men brawling in open saloons. What if these old, decaying buildings could talk--what stories could they relate?

If these buildings could relate their histories, it would be a disappointment to all who expect a rough, roudy, and glamorous history. Their story would tell of the slow, peaceful growth of Ness City from the time they were built during the 1880's until the present date. There would be no mention of range wars, Indian fights or other brawling episodes so often associated with the West. As the buildings grew old, the business district moved east a couple of blocks leaving these old stone buildings as mementos of the past.

Settlement was slow in coming to Ness County. The most used trails were south of this area and prior to 1873 only two or three cattlemen lived in the county. The first settlers who arrived in 1873 met hardships beyond description. The year 1873 was the driest on record and the grasshopper plague of 1874 the worst on record.¹ Having been cheated out of their savings by their unscrupulous leader, many families nearly starved before they could get away.²

¹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Report Number 285 of the State Board of Agriculture (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1948), pp. 124-125.

² Frank W. Blackmar, Kansas (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), II, p. 352.

The early years of Ness County were extremely hard years, but still the county increased in population. Thousands of settlers poured into the county during the '80's and hundreds moved out. The hardiest remaining while less rugged individuals gave up and returned to the East. Many of today's farmers derive a rich, full life from the soil homesteaded by their forefathers.

There is beauty in Ness County. Not the majestic beauty of a mountain, a tall building, or the seashore, but, rather a more subtle beauty. A farm pond nestled in a valley and surrounded by green pastures on which graze fine cattle, a field of golden grain, or the cool breeze that blows across a field of alfalfa. These are things of local beauty to be found, and appreciated, in Ness County.

As Ness County came of age, communities fell into ruin and were forgotten while other communities prospered. Farms and businesses were lost while others were growing. Today, the total wealth of Ness County is greater than ever before. Why did some succeed while others failed? What of the future? Is the county able to support an increasing population unless new outlets for labor are found? In an attempt to answer these questions in part, I have dedicated this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
II. NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS	3
Location.	3
Topography.	3
Soils	4
Water Resources	5
Climate	5
Rainfall.	6
Temperature	7
Winds	7
Frosts.	8
Hail.	8
Blizzards	8
III. HISTORY OF NESS COUNTY.	13
The First Settlement.	13
Early Hardships	17
Prairie Fires	18
Incentives to Immigration	20
Growth of the County.	23
Early Towns, Villages and Post Offices.	30
Sidney.	30
Clarinda.	31
Schoharie	32

CHAPTER

PAGE

Harold.	32
Ness City	33
Bazine.	34
Beeler.	35
Ransom.	35
Utica	36
Brownell.	37
Arnold.	37
IV ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	38
Agriculture	38
Income from Farm Products	42
Wheat	43
Sorghum	44
Barley.	44
Oats.	45
Corn.	45
Rye	45
Potatoes.	46
Meat Production	46
Poultry and Eggs.	47
Milk Production	47
Alfalfa	47
Wool Clip	48
Turkeys	48

CHAPTER

PAGE

Minor Crops	48
Transportation.	91
Railroads	91
Roads	95
Airports.	96
Mineral Resources	97
Limestone	99
Oil	99
Manufacturing	100
Banking in Ness County.	106
Ness City Banks	106
Beeler Banks.	115
Utica Banks	115
Ransom Banks.	116
Bazine Banks.	117
Brownell Banks.	117
Arnold Banks.	118
Public Utilities: Electricity and Gas.	118
Water	118
Telephones.	118
V. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.	120
Schools	122
Newspapers (Introduction)	125
History of Ness County Newspapers	127

CHAPTER

PAGE

VI. SUMMARY 133

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 135

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Annual Rainfall, Ness County, Kansas, 1891-1952.	10
2. Income from Wheat Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	49
3. Income from Sorghum Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	57
4. Income from Barley Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	61
5. Income from Oat Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	65
6. Income from Corn Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	69
7. Income from Rye Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	73
8. Income from Potato Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	77
9. Income from Meat Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1915-1950.	81
10. Income from Poultry and Eggs, Ness County, Kansas, 1915-1950.	83
11. Income from Milk Production, Ness County, Kansas, 1915-1950.	85
12. Number of Livestock, Ness County, Kansas, 1883-1950.	87

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NESS COUNTY

The years selected for study in this thesis cover the period from the time of the second organization of the county in 1800 to the year 1953. Important events prior to this time are included as background material or because they have a bearing on the future development of the county.

The plan of this thesis is to devote a chapter to each important division of the economic activity of the county. The county is predominately rural and the entire economy prospers or suffers with the success or failure of the wheat crop. Since agriculture holds such a prominent place in the economy, it has been treated at greater length and in more detail than other phases of the counties' economic life.

The soil and climate and their effect on economic life are discussed in the following chapter. The next chapter presents a brief history of the county. Early settlements and factors tending to encourage or discourage settlement are noted. The chapter on the economic development of Ness County, although devoted principally to agriculture, presents an analysis of other industries. Transportation facilities, mineral resources, manufacturing, banking and public utilities are outlined in this section. A brief look at the social development of the county is presented in the next to the last chapter. In the final chapter an appraisal is made of past accomplishments; of lessons from the past that have, or should have, been learned; and, of possible future trends.

The author realizes that there can be no clear dividing line between the chapters in this thesis. For example, the early history of the settlements of Ness County cannot be discussed without mention of the economic forces which caused the growth, or decline, of these villages. In this respect, an effort has been made to hold repetition to a minimum. Mention of soils, climate, resources, and railroads appear again and again in connection with the early history of the county and some repetition has been inevitable. Still, an honest effort has been made to group related material under a single heading.

In writing this thesis, the author has attempted to bring together a wealth of information from a variety of sources; to separate facts from rumors; and to present the material in a readable manner.

The author wishes to express his appreciation for the invaluable assistance given by Dr. Leonard W. Thompson under whose direction this thesis was prepared. Acknowledgment must be made to Dr. F. B. Streeter, Librarian, Fort Hays Kansas State College, for invaluable assistance and advice in locating the materials used in this thesis. Acknowledgment must also be made to my wife, Patty Keith Wesley, for her aid in locating and sorting material, her constructive criticisms, and for the encouragement such as only a wonderful wife can give.

CHAPTER II

NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Location

Ness County, in the central part of the western half of the state, is the fifth county from Colorado, the fourth south from Nebraska, and the fourth from the Oklahoma line. It is bounded on the north by Trego and Gove Counties; on the east by Rush and Pawnee; on the south by Hodgeman; and on the west by Lane. The area of the county is 1,080 square miles, being thirty-six miles from east to west, and thirty miles from north to south.

Topography

The elevation of Ness county is approximately 2,250 feet.¹ The topography varies from gently sloping to rolling and hilly. The principle streams are the Walnut Creek and the Pawnee Creek. The former drains a large area of central Ness County while the latter stream drains the extreme southern part. There are numerous small spring-fed streams and dry gullies which drain the northernmost sections of the county. These flow into Trego County where they join the Smokey Hill River. Floods have not been a problem in Ness County as the run off of water is good.

¹ David M. Cole, "Economic Trends in Western Kansas, 1915-1939," Unpublished Research, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, p. 160.

Soils

The county lies chiefly in two natural agricultural land resource areas.² The approximate eastern one-third of the county is the southwest extension of the "Central Kansas Rolling Plains." This area is characterized by having narrow, almost level divides and long smooth slopes with sharp breaks or steep slopes adjacent to well-entrenched drainageways. The soils are generally moderately heavy hardlands having been developed chiefly from the weathering of wind-worn silt (Loess), limy shales and limestone (Cretaceous), outwash silts, sand, and gravel (Tertiary formations). Drainage of this area is chiefly into Pawnee Creek in the southeast corner and Walnut Creek through the central part of the county.

The approximate western two-thirds of the county consists of the "West Kansas Breaks and Canyons Section of the Loess Bed-rock Plains." This is the transition areas between the high plains and the rolling plains of central Kansas. Soil forming material vary markedly within short distances. Mortar beds and caliche (Ogallala) form the cap-rock rim at the breaks from the high plains. The bedrock consists primarily of a yellowish, highly limy, chalk rock (Niobrara). Along Pawnee Creek the chalk rock has been eroded away and the grey limy shales, massive limestone and dark clayey shales (Carlyle and Greenhorn) are exposed.

² United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperating, Physical Land Conditions Affecting Use, Conservation, and Management of Land Resources, Ness County, Kansas (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 1-22. (All references regarding soils are from this report except where marked otherwise.)

The smooth area around Utica, Arnold and Ransom in the north part of the county, and an area southwest of Ness City consists of an eastward extension of the "Moist Semi-arid Hardland Section of the Loess Outwash Tablelands." Here the slopes are smooth to almost flat, and the soils are deep and fertile.

An area of smooth, almost level, dark terrace soils occurs in the southeast portion of the county adjacent to Pawnee Creek and along Walnut Creek in the central part of the county. These areas are friable to moderately heavy, silty to clayey soils, except in low depression areas where the soils are heavier.

Water Resources

Water supplies for domestic and livestock use on farms are generally secured from wells. In the rolling pasture areas, farm ponds are needed for livestock use since here the underlying shale and limestone bedrock make water supplies limited. Along Pawnee Creek water is found in places suitable for pump irrigation.

Climate

Climate is a major factor in determining adapted field crops and native vegetation as well as crop yields in Ness County. Weather records from Ness County are very incomplete as no government weather station is maintained there. Averages have, however, been interpolated from records of surrounding counties.

From these interpolations, Ness County averages 150 to 200 clear days, 75 to 100 partly cloudy days, and 50 to 75 cloudy days per year.³ The average annual snowfall ranges from about 15 inches in the southeastern section of the county to 21 inches in the northwest section.⁴ The ground is covered with snow to an average depth of 0.1 inch or more on about 25 days each year.⁵

Rainfall

Average annual precipitation during the years for which records have been kept has been about 20 inches. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, rainfall has varied from a minimum of 8 inches in one year to a maximum of 32 inches in another year.⁶ The rainfall record published in The Ness County News, however, shows a maximum precipitation of 34.97 inches in 1915.⁷ In the average of these years, 78 per cent of the rainfall has come during the six months of the usual growing season. This wide variation in rainfall has caused great differences in the annual crop yields. May and June are the

³ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Report Number 285 of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1948), pp. 239-240.

⁴ Ibid., p. 116.

⁵ Loc. cit.

⁶ United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperating, op. cit., p. 2.

⁷ The Ness County News, March 5, 1953.

high rainfall months averaging about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches. As low as .06 and as high as 9 inches have been recorded in these months.⁸ The heaviest rain occurred on September 5, 1901 when a total of 8.30 inches of rain fell in a single twenty four hour period at Ness City.⁹

Temperature

The highest temperature was recorded on August 3, 1901 when the mercury reached 110 degrees.¹⁰ The lowest was 28 degrees below zero recorded February 13, 1905.¹¹ The mean annual temperature averages about 55 degrees.¹²

Winds

The general levelness of the topography permits a relatively high wind velocity. A change in the wind direction often results in an extreme change in temperature. The usual direction of the wind is from the south and the windiest months are March, April and May. August is the month of least wind. Strong northerly or northwesterly

⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperating, loc. cit.

⁹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁰ Loc. cit.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 173.

¹² United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperating, loc. cit.

winds are common during the winter months. The average wind velocity, from interpolated records, is about 12 miles per hour.¹³

Frosts

Accurate records as to the length of the growing season in Ness County are not available but damage from frost is not considered a serious matter. Records indicate that the average length of the growing season is from 167 to 174 days.¹⁴

Hail

Hail is a menace to the maturing wheat crop. The actual frequency of damaging hail over a given area is not definitely known but figures compiled from extended experience of insurance companies indicate that the loss is only about four percent of the total Kansas yield.¹⁵

Blizzards

Thanks to our system of meteorological forecasting and communication, blizzards are no longer the hazard to the stockraiser that they once were. Today, such storms rarely do any severe damage in Ness County.

¹³ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, op. cit., p. 247.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 226.

Mention should be made of the disastrous winter of 1885-86.

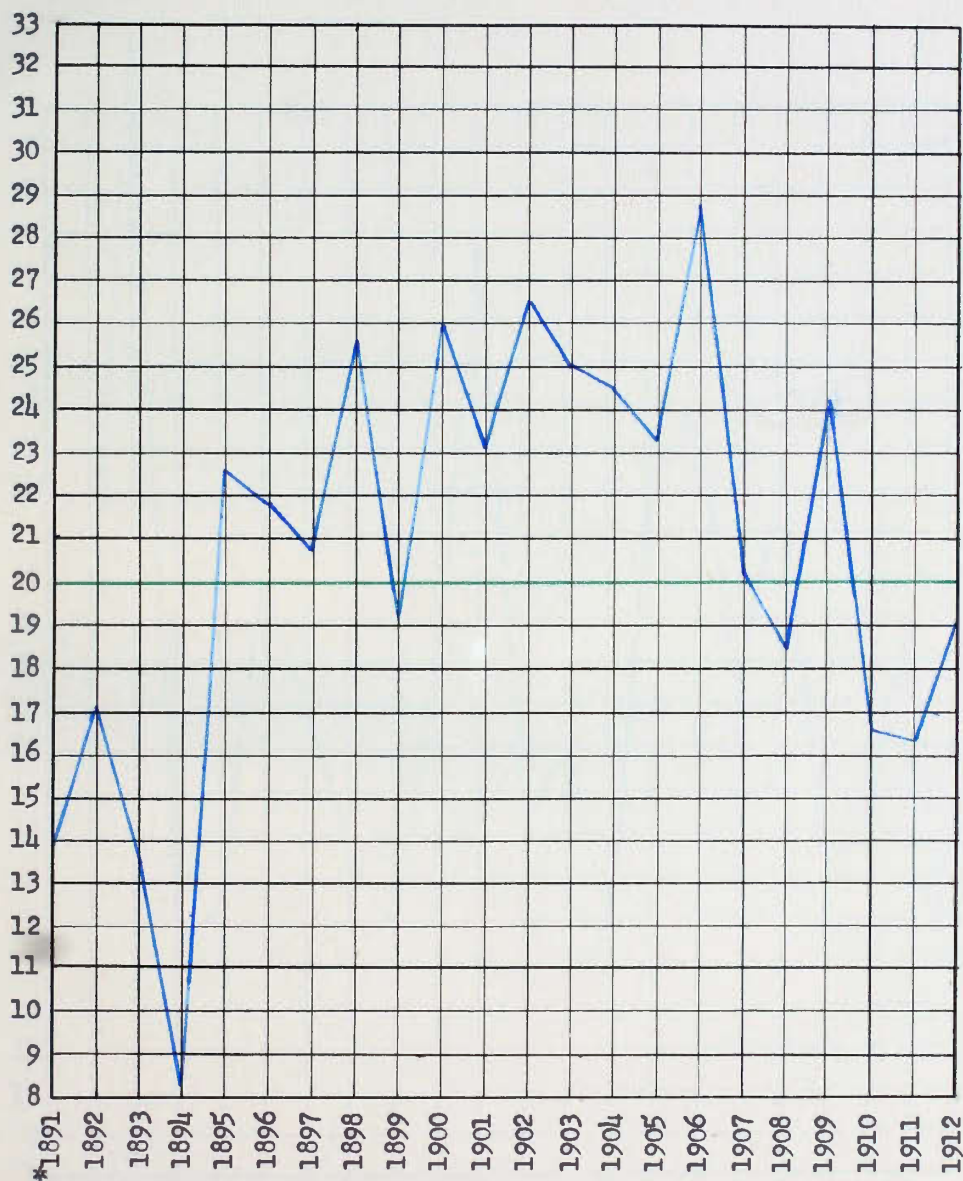
At the time of the great blizzard of January 7, 1886, housing was poorly constructed and of a temporary nature, fences were few and far between and there were no facilities for feeding and sheltering livestock.

January 1886 was one of the coldest months on record, with snow covering the ground almost continually. A cold wave, with heavy snow that caused drifts ten feet deep, began on New Year's Eve and continued through January 1. Lack of proper nourishment was already weakening livestock when the blizzard struck the northwestern part of the State on January 6 with no advance warning whatever. It spread rapidly to the southeast and east, reaching Ness City at about 2 a.m. on January 7. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the cattle in the storm's path perished and those which survived were walking skeletons.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 253-254.

FIGURE I

Annual Rainfall¹⁷
 Ness County, Kansas, 1891-1952 (3 pages)



¹⁷ The Ness County News, March 5, 1953.

* Incomplete--record starts with month of June

FIGURE I

Annual Rainfall
Ness County, Kansas, 1891-1952

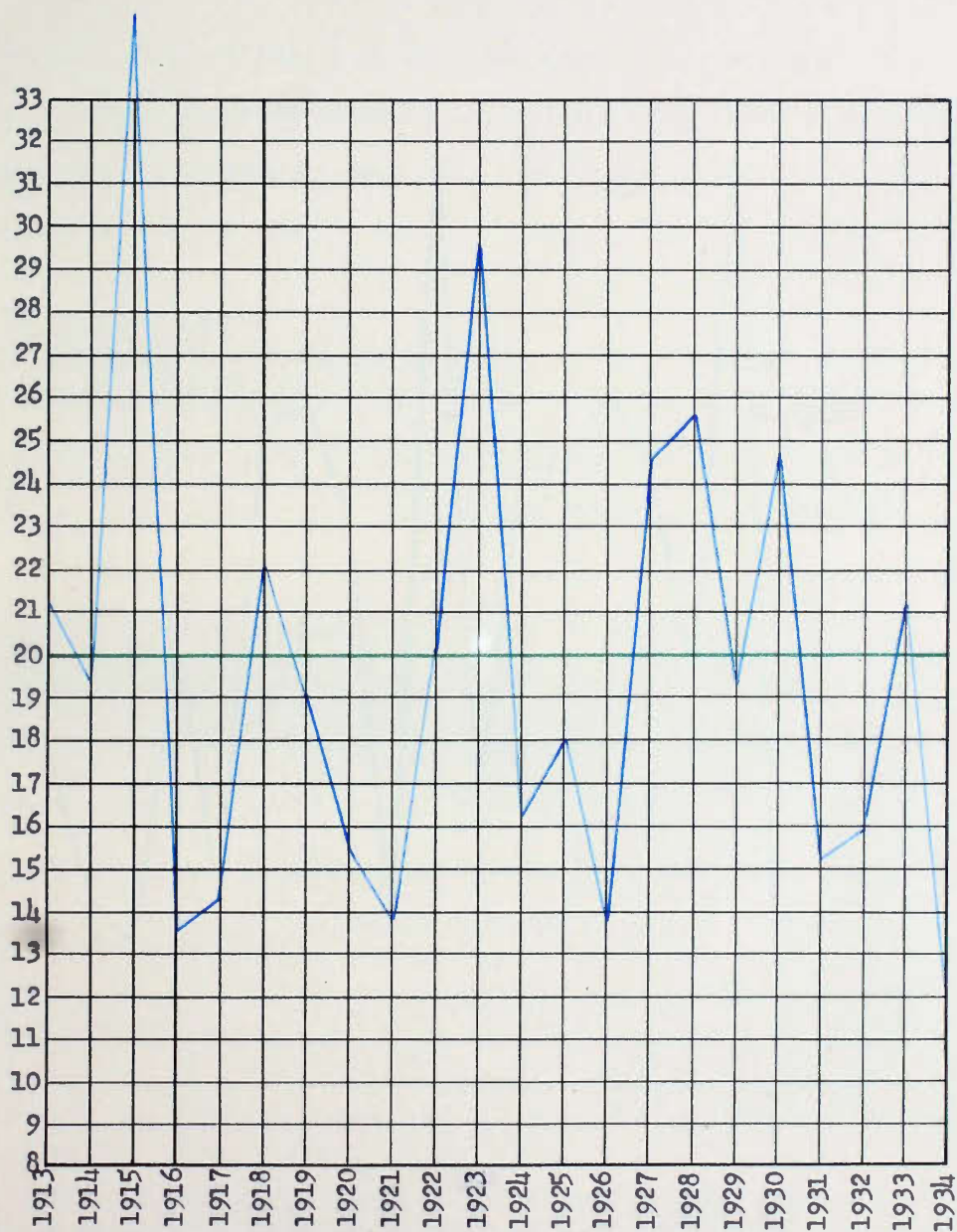
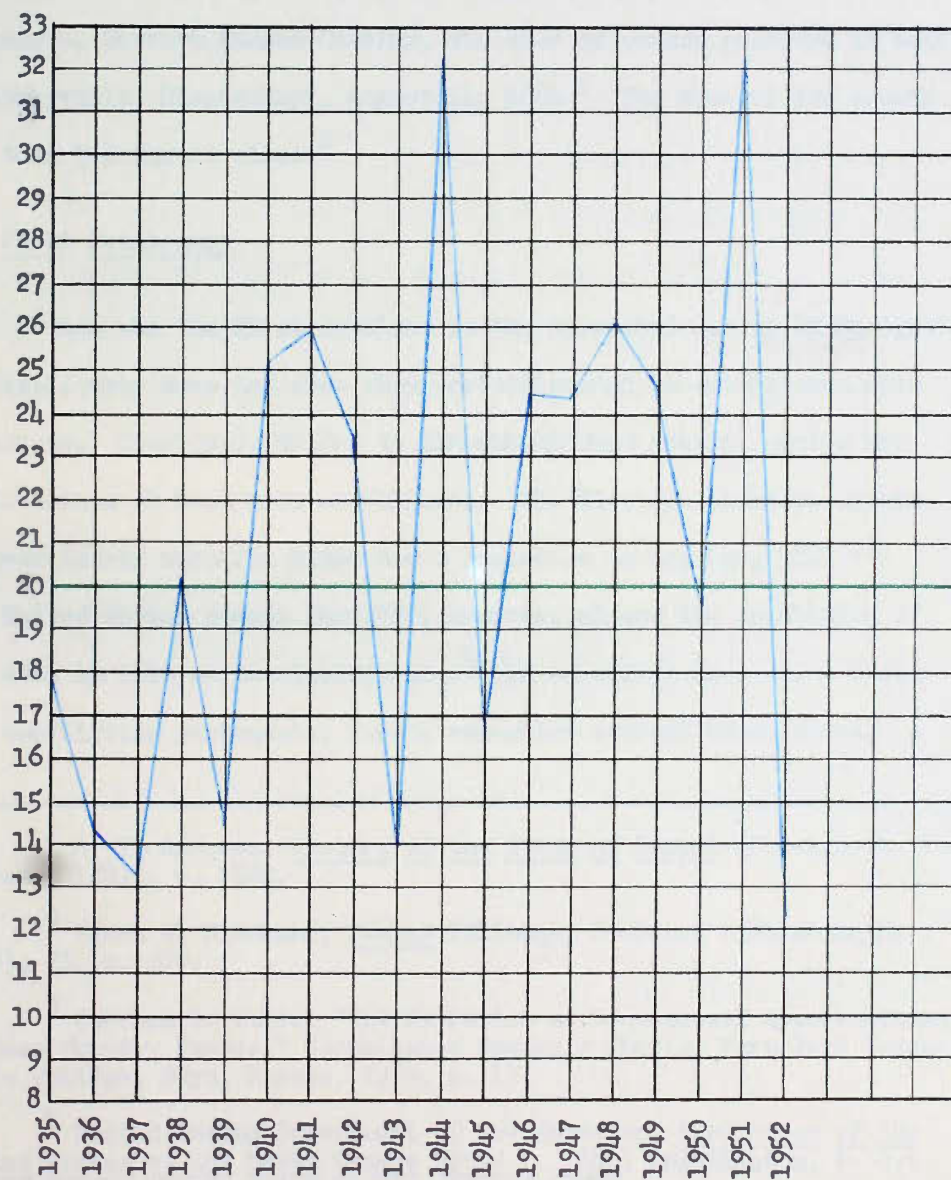


FIGURE I

Annual Rainfall
Ness County, Kansas, 1891-1952



CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF NESS COUNTY

The county was named, in 1867, for Noah V. Ness, Corporal of Company G, Seventh Kansas Cavalry, who died of wounds received in battle at Abbeyville, Mississippi, August 11, 1864.¹ The area of the county was then 900 square miles.²

The First Settlement

Just who the first settlers in the area that was to be designated as Ness County were and when they arrived cannot be established with certainty. Charles G. Wolfe, in his unpublished thesis, quotes Mr. O. L. Lennen of Ness City as follows: "The first settlers to locate in Ness County were Joe Dixon and a companion in October, 1872."³ The United States census for 1880, however, places the population of the area in 1870 at two inhabitants.⁴ In an effort to resolve these two conflicting statements, I have assembled several known facts.

¹ A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 1524.

² Frank W. Blackmar, Kansas (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), II, p. 352.

³ Charles G. Wolfe, "The Evolution of Educational Opportunities in Ness County, Kansas," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 1950, p. 17.

⁴ United States Department of the Interior, Statistics of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880) (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1883).

First, it is certain that any settlers in the area before 1873 were cattlemen and not farmers.⁵ Second, these men were "wintering" cattle that were turned out on the prairies of Kansas because they could not be sold.⁶ Third, the prices paid for Texas cattle in 1870 were particularly good as the demand exceeded the supply, but in 1871 the picture had changed and there were more cattle than ever before but few buyers. Half of the cattle driven from Texas in that year had to be turned out on the Kansas Prairies.⁷ Finally, the Texas cattle drives into Kansas prior to 1871 followed the Abilene Trail, but in that year the Ellsworth and Newton Trail was opened and, in 1872, many cattle being driven to Ellsworth were turned out on the prairies.⁸

This evidence indicates that 1872 is the date when the first cattlemen settled in the area that was to become Ness County. Further, the census listing the population of the area at two inhabitants appears in the 1880 census reports and not at all in the 1870 reports. This report also places the population of Ness County in 1880 at 3,722 inhabitants; a figure which seems far too high. A careful check of the 1880 newspapers has uncovered still more conflicting statements. The Ness County Pioneer, issued March 27, 1880 states that "Ness County

⁵ Numerous authorities may be cited. For example, see A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas, page 1524, and Frank W. Blackmar, Kansas, volume II, page 352.

⁶ See A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas, page 1524, and Frank W. Blackmar, Kansas, volume II, page 352.

⁷ Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1931), pp. 230-231.

⁸ Ibid., p. 223.

has a population of 3,496 of whom 1,144 are legal voters."⁹ The paper does not elaborate on how this figure was obtained. This same newspaper, on July 5, 1880, states that "when the census was taken March 1st, there was [were] between 1,300 and 1,400 people in the county."¹⁰ It seems quite likely that the larger figure was more of a propaganda device for the county than an accurate check of the population. At any rate, the reliability of these reports cannot be counted upon as being any more accurate than the memory of an old settler.

It is certain that it was in the spring of 1873 that Dr. S. G. Rodgers came from Chicago with half a dozen families and established the town of Smallwood City near the present site of the town of Bazine. He made up a fraudulent census showing a population of 600 and sent a petition to the governor which he had signed with a number of names taken from a Kansas City directory. The petition was granted and on October 23, 1873, the governor proclaimed the county organized, named Smallwood City as the temporary county seat, and the boundaries of the county were enlarged so as to include an area of 1,080 square miles. O. H. Perry, Thomas Meyers, and John Rodgers were appointed special county commissioners, with Charles MaGuire as special county clerk.¹¹

At the State election held November 4, 1873, the following officers were elected: county clerk, Charles MaGuire; clerk of the district court, Edward Haydn; justice of the peace, John Lee; State representative

⁹ The Ness County Pioneer, March 27, 1880.

¹⁰ The Ness County Pioneer, July 5, 1880.

¹¹ Frank W. Blackmar, Kansas (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), II, p. 352.

and county treasurer, Dr. S. G. Rodgers. Bonds to the amount of \$15,000 were voted to build a courthouse, and a bridge across the Walnut Creek.¹² Dr. Rodgers took his seat in the Kansas Legislature on January 13, 1874.¹³

On February 3, 1874, H. J. Mc Gaffigan, the Representative from Ellis County, offered the following resolution, which was adopted, and the papers in the case were referred to the House Committee on Elections.

Resolved: That a special committee of three be appointed to inquire into the organization of Ness County, and that said committee be authorized to administer oaths, send for persons and papers, and to visit Ness County if deemed necessary, for the prosecution of this inquiry.¹⁴

John E. Farnsworth, a cattleman who had arrived a few months before the settlers, exposed the frauds of Rodgers to the legislature. On November 4, 1873, the poll-books at Smallwood City showed that forty-eight votes had been cast there on the day of election. An affidavit from Farnsworth, however, stated that a census of all the inhabitants in December, 1874, showed the number of men, women, and children to be not over 140. In January, 1874, the total population of the county was 79.¹⁵ Mr. Farnsworth's opinion was that there were no more than 14 legal voters in the county.¹⁶

¹² Ellen Magire, "History of Ness County," The Ness County News, June 6, 1946.

¹³ Frank W. Blackmar, loc. cit.

¹⁴ A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 1524.

¹⁵ Loc. cit.

¹⁶ Frank W. Blackmar, op. cit., p. 353.

The investigating committee found these claims to be true and upon presentation of a petition to Governor Osborne, signed by twenty citizens, the county was promptly disorganized and Rodgers unseated in the legislature. The date was February 13, 1874.¹⁷

After the fraud was exposed, Rodgers, being the county treasurer, took the money which had accrued from the sale of bonds and left the country. The families which he had induced on false representations to come to Ness County nearly starved before they could get away.¹⁸

Early Hardships

Not all of the settlers whom Rodgers had brought to Ness County gave up when the fraud was exposed. A few remained and tried to raise their crops. These few met with unparalleled hardships.

The settlement at Smallwood City was organized at an unfortunate time. A terrible drought held Kansas in its grip and the year 1873, when the settlers arrived, was the driest year in the history of Kansas.¹⁹ Those who returned East in the Spring of 1874 were the lucky ones, for that year saw the worst grasshopper plague in the history of the State.²⁰ Early settlers who saw the flights stated the swarms of grasshoppers were so dense they darkened the sky like clouds and when they alighted

¹⁷ A. T. Andreas, loc. cit.

¹⁸ Frank W. Blackmar, loc. cit.

¹⁹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Report Number 285 of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1948), p. 124.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

all growing vegetation was killed within a few days, and in some instances within a few hours. The destruction of crops was almost complete over the state and it was then too late to replant with any prospect of yield. So complete was the destruction of crops and so great the resulting distress and poverty of the settlers that a special session of the legislature was called in September, 1874, for the purpose of considering measures of relief. The legislature further passed an act which authorized town trustees and mayors of cities not in any township to summon any male citizen between eighteen and forty-five years of age to assist in any method of control when a petition of fifteen legal voters was made to an authorized official.²¹

The summer of 1875 marked the end of the drought and as rains soaked the prairies, immigration was given a fresh impetus.

Prairie Fires

The prairie fire was one of the most feared hazards faced by the early pioneer settlers. In the late fall of 1878, the entire county was burned over.²² Most of the settlers, however, were able to save their belongings by setting "back-fires."

By the end of the year 1880, townships were organizing fire companies in an effort to meet the threat²³ and in 1887, Ness City

²¹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-second Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1920), p. 143.

²² The Ness County News, May 31, 1930.

²³ The Ness County Republican, September 23, 1896.

purchased a chemical fire engine.²⁴ Maliciously starting a prairie fire was a major crime on the frontier as may be seen from the following notice:

The Western Kansas Stock Association will pay a reward of Two Hundred Dollars for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person or persons for maliciously setting fire to grass on the range, causing damage to any member.²⁵

Probably the most serious fire that ever occurred in Ness County was that of March 12, 1893, when all the grass in the county was burned, most of the feed for stock, and a number of farm buildings and residences.²⁶ Newspapers clamored for legal action against anyone causing a prairie fire, whether maliciously or otherwise. The following article appeared in The Ness City Sentinel after the disastrous fire of 1893:

Is not the careless setting of fires a subject for legal proceedings? The dreadful pictures of desolation in Western Kansas today is the result of carelessness somewhere--someone has blundered. It behooves every city, township and county in Western Kansas to organize and agree upon a plan of action in this matter. There should be severe and certain punishment for the being who makes the prairie fire a possibility. Prairie fires are not the result of spontaneous combustion.²⁷

The last great prairie fire in Ness County occurred in March of 1898. The following description is from The Ness County News:

The most destructive fire that has visited our community during the past five years swept over the western portion of the county last Monday and Tuesday, leaving in its wake blackened prairie, heaps of ashes noting here and there spots where formerly stood barns, stables and stacks of feed, aggregating

²⁴ The Nonchalanta Herald, August 5, 1887.

²⁵ The Western Central Kansas Cowboy, September 1, 1883.

²⁶ The Ness County News, March 9, 1935.

²⁷ The Ness City Sentinel, January 7, 1893.

a loss to our people of many thousands of dollars. The fire that caused the greatest destruction came from the neighborhood of Cimarron, on the Arkansas River. All day Monday it was seen wreaking its destruction west and south, and rapidly approaching toward the city, fanned by a wind that was traveling at from forty to fifty miles an hour, and it looked as if only a miracle [miracle] could prevent its reaching this place; and at about five o'clock in the afternoon the miracle [miracle] was wrought, for at that hour the wind suddenly changed to the northwest. But the change brought no permanent feeling of relief, for a fire had started north of the city, and was burning fiercely and running rapidly south and east. The fires raged for two days before being brought under control, burning a strip 12 miles wide and 30 miles long in this county and much more in other counties.²⁸

As more and more acres of virgin land were broken and roads crisscrossed the prairie, the danger of prairie fires diminished and became a thing of the past.

Incentives to Immigration

The passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 made free public lands a tremendous lure to eastern home-seekers of small means. After more prosperous appearing lands in Eastern Kansas had been homesteaded, the flow of settlers into Ness County quickened.

The rapid extension of the railroads across the region was another development of great importance. Before the railroads, the vast reaches of the plains could be traversed only by the slow moving prairie schooner or other horse, mule, or ox-team transportation. The settlers who preceded the railroads had difficulty in getting furniture, building material, and machinery to their farms, and even more difficulty in shipping out surplus grain or other products. One

²⁸ The Ness County News, March 19, 1898.

peculiar feature affecting the influence of railroads on the settlement of the plains country should be particularly noted, and that is the fact that railroad construction, instead of following settlement, in the main preceded it. That is, instead of zigzagging from town to town and exploiting the more populous districts, as they had done in the East, the railroads of the plains struck boldly out across a vast, sparsely populated region, becoming powerful magnets that attracted settlers and town-builders.²⁹

A great railroad excitement prevailed from about 1885 to 1890. During this period two lines were built across Ness County; one, in the northern part under the name of the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic, today known as the Missouri Pacific, and the Chicago, Kansas and Western, a branch of the Santa Fe, passing through the central part of the county. Originally the Missouri Pacific line was scheduled to angle south from La Crosse to Ness City, but through a legal controversy between the two competing lines, the Santa Fe was awarded the right of way for the present road and the Missouri Pacific was extended west on its present route.³⁰ The Santa Fe reached Ness City in January, 1887 while the Missouri Pacific was built through the county in 1889.³¹ Railroads will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

²⁹ Walter P. Webb, The Great Plains (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), p. 275.

³⁰ Ellen Magire, "History of Ness County," The Ness County News, June 6, 1946.

³¹ The Ness County News, August 17, 1929.

A third development favoring settlement was the suppression of the warlike Plains Indians. A series of treaties was completed in 1868 which resulted in the pacification of these tribes and their retirement soon after to the reservations. No serious Indian difficulties were experienced by Kansas settlers after 1869.³²

A series of important inventions hastened the progress of farm settlement in the plains section. When J. F. Glidden, an Illinois farmer, constructed a practicable barbed wire fence in 1873, the economic life of the plains frontier was revolutionized. In the space of two decades it converted the open range into a land of fenced farms and ranches. Though the range empire at first fought its encroachments, the cattlemen eventually capitulated and in so doing discovered the way to surer profits, for barbed wire enabled them to segregate their herds and thus improve the grade of their stock, to raise hay and sorghums for winter feed, and to combine grain farming with stockraising.

The well drill and the windmill played an indispensable part in the invasion of the dry belt. The extensive introduction of windmills into the Ness County area began in the seventies after a durable, self-governing type was placed on the market. They enabled the cattleman to fence pastures apart from the scarce waterholes and the homesteader could irrigate a fair-sized patch of garden, thus affording a supply of vegetables even when everything else was destroyed by drought.

³² Carroll D. Clark and Roy L. Roberts, People of Kansas (Topeka, Kansas: The Kansas State Planning Board, 1936), pp. 20-21.

The introduction of the steel prairie breaker in the seventies, followed by the sulky and gang plows of the eighties and nineties, greatly expedited the task of breaking the prairie sod and bringing the land under cultivation. Invention of other tillage implements, such as the adjustable straight-tooth harrow, the disc harrow, the field cultivator, and the lister encouraged extensive farming methods adapted to conditions on the plains, greatly reducing labor requirements and lowering costs.³³

Growth of the County

On April 11, 1880, Governor St. John issued a proclamation reorganizing the county, designating the town of Sidney as the temporary county seat and appointing the following temporary officers: county clerk, James H. Elting; county commissioners, John E. Farnsworth, L. Weston, and L. E. Knowles.³⁴

The first meeting of the commissioners was held April 23, 1880, and L. Weston was elected chairman. At that meeting the county was divided into three commissioner districts, twelve miles wide by thirty miles long, running north and south. Nine townships each ten by twelve miles in size were established and named as follows: Waring, Bazine, Highpoint, Nevada, Center, Franklin, Ohio, Eden, and Johnson. A few years later, however, the townships were changed by removing two miles from the south side of Center and adding it to Franklin, and still

³³ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁴ Frank W. Blackmar, op. cit., p. 352.

later a new township, which received the name of Forrester, was created by taking more or less of its area from the townships of Center, Eden, Ohio and Nevada. The commissioners also named June 1, 1880 as the date for the election to select a permanent county seat.³⁵

The campaign for the county seat was heated but there was no bloodshed. The southern half of the county generally favored Sidney while the northern half of the county was divided by scattered factions.³⁶ These "scattered factions" were Clarinda,³⁷ about two miles north of Ness City, Waterport (Paris), about one mile east of Ness City, and Schoharie, about four miles southeast of Ness City. A "People's Movement" was organized which agreed to support the town which made the largest donation to the county.³⁸ Sidney offered a courthouse and land if they should be chosen and Ness City countered by offering more land and a better courthouse.³⁹ One by one the other contestants withdrew, throwing their support to Ness City. Sidney accused Ness City of bribery and of sponsoring the "People's Movement" in an effort to stem the growing sentiment favoring Ness City.

³⁵ Ellen Magire, "History of Ness County," The Ness County News, June 6, 1946.

³⁶ Kansas State Historical Society, Kansas Historical Collections (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1912), XII, p. 470.

³⁷ The location of Clarinda cannot be placed at any exact point. For two years the town had been moving from place to place searching for an adequate supply of water.

³⁸ The Walnut Valley Times, August 7, 1886.

³⁹ Kansas State Historical Society, op. cit., p. 471.

The following quotation, complete with grammatical errors, from The Ness County Pioneer, published at Sidney on May 17, 1880, sums up the situation as things stood on the eve of the election.

The Campaign - Spencer started a store, got a post-office nine miles from the center of the county--and still keeps the Ness post-office. Calhoun and Co., went ahead (though they did not get the place they wanted.) Established a post-office (Ness City), hired a mail carrier to run off the route, blewed themselves as the great commercial center. Clarinda straddled the center stone. Paris squealed once in a while; and each point began to recruit soldiers for the conflict. Clarinda dug and bored for water. Ness City did the same, and failed. Then Sidney sprung into existance, in reality the youngest; and by way of training the soldiers began to throw blue shale, at each other. Water, or rather want of it, was made the "Gattling gun" and other minor defects answered the purpose of musketry.

Finally, Clarinda gave up; sold her dry wells for post holes, and "people" tried to bring in a substitute, Ness City bulldozed them; and offered a bigger bribe than Waterport (alias Paris). Then Spencer who had been moving quietly on running his store and post-office comes in, and now the **fight** comes between the three, Sidney, Ness City and Waterport; and you "take the one you likes."⁴⁰

Ness City was chosen as the county seat by a large majority⁴¹ but Sidney did not give up. There was much bitterness over the manner in which the election was conducted as is shown by the following article from The Ness County Pioneer.

Sidney was not built with the calculation of moving, she has every advantage a town could wish, she is near enough to supply Ness City with water during court times, her hotels are ample to accomodate those who are obliged to remain over night when they come to pay taxes, she has a good trade, and many friends, she invites strangers to come, and is confident that in time the people will see how cheaply they have been sold; she and her friends have considered the bribe of Ness City an insult to honest voters and one that should not be passed without an indignant repudiation.

.

⁴⁰ The Ness County Pioneer, May 17, 1880.

⁴¹ Ellen Magire, "History of Ness County," The Ness County News, June 6, 1946.

It is said that Elting carried the votes of center township in his pocket from Tuesday night until Friday morning. We didn't hardly believe that. But we did see the ballot boxes setting around in the Hotel, and at the store, besides being carried around from one place to another by some of the Ness City-People's Movement.⁴²

Sidney immediately protested the election charging bribery and improper handling of the ballot boxes.⁴³ It was not until February 8, 1883 that the case was settled.⁴⁴ On that date, the Kansas Supreme Court upheld Ness City as the county seat.⁴⁵

Other officers chosen at the election were: county clerk, James H. Elting; treasurer, B. F. Garrett; register of deeds, J. A. Taylor; sheriff, Gilmore Kenney; coroner, Dr. B. F. Grosthwaite; surveyor, L. E. Knowles; superintendent of public instruction, F. A. Goodrich; county attorney, Cyrus Corning; clerk of the district court, N. W. Shaw; probate judge, J. K. Barns; commissioners, J. S. Lightner, William Harding and Samuel C. Kagrice.⁴⁶

Noah Shaw, who was elected to the office of clerk of the district court, was unable to provide bond required to serve in the office and left the county. He went to the eastern part of the state ostensibly to raise money for his bond, but committed suicide while there.

R. J. McFarland was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by Shaw's death.⁴⁷

⁴² The Ness County Pioneer, June 7, 1880.

⁴³ Kansas State Historical Society, loc. cit.

⁴⁴ Loc. cit.

⁴⁵ The Topeka Daily Capital, August 18, 1929.

⁴⁶ Frank W. Blackmar, loc. cit.

⁴⁷ Ellen Magire, loc. cit.

During the great land boom of the "eighties" the population of the county showed a tremendous increase. From 1884 to 1885 the population of the county increased almost five hundred inhabitants; the next year saw the population jump by more than one thousand; and the following year, over two thousand more people moved into the county. The population in 1887 stood at 6,996 inhabitants.⁴⁸

During this period of giant land speculations, towns would spring up over night, huge operations were common, and land dealers were realizing a terrific profit. The situation was comparable to the giant stock market speculations of the "twenties" and the results were much the same.

The nature of the land boom is shown by the following quotation from The Walnut Valley Sentinel, July 31, 1886:

There remains no government land of any consequence--the little there is, is so stony and hilly that it is fit for nothing. However, relinquishments to good claims (160 acres) can be purchased from \$125 to \$250. Land is worth from \$5 to \$12 per acre, according to the kind of land, amount of improvements and distance from town. Land in the west is nearly always sold for cash and in bodies from a quarter section to one or two sections. A quarter section one mile from town (the county seat) is worth \$12 per acre; a quarter four miles \$7 or \$8 per acre; one ten or fifteen miles from town \$5 per acre. One year ago these same lands could have been purchased at half the price for which they now sell, and from the present indications, in one year from now they will double in price.⁴⁹

The collapse, which came late in 1887, was inevitable. Settlers who had bought land at boom prices were unable to meet the payments.

⁴⁸ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Biennial Reports (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office).

⁴⁹ The Walnut Valley Sentinel, July 31, 1886.

The census of 1890 shows that three-fourths of all the farms in Kansas were mortgaged, the farm mortgaged indebtedness amounting to \$235,000,000 on which an average interest of 9 per cent per annum was paid. On chattel mortgages a rate of from 40 to 375 per cent per annum was paid.⁵⁰

Foreclosures were the order of the day. In Kansas, during the first six months of the year 1890, there were 2,650 foreclosures, and a like number of farms were deeded to mortgage companies to avoid the expense of foreclosure, making about 10,600 farms, or about 1,696,000 acres lost that year.⁵¹

To add to the rural suffering, bad crop years followed. There was a serious drought during the years 1893 and 1894. The rural suffering during these years has probably never been equalled in the history of the State.⁵² The ten years following the collapse in 1887 saw over three thousand people leave the county.⁵³

By the year 1910 there was still land to be had from various land investment companies and individuals who held title to large tracts in Ness County. The years 1911, 1912, and 1913, however, were difficult years. For these three years with hardly a pause, the dust blew day and night. It would rain in the morning and the dust would blow again that afternoon. But rains were far between and light. Crops baked

⁵⁰ William E. Connelly, History of Kansas (Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc., 1928), II, p. 1157.

⁵¹ Loc. cit.

⁵² Carroll D. Clark and Roy L. Roberts, op. cit., p. 27.

⁵³ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Biennial Reports.

and were blown from the ground. The top-soil of whole counties moved north. Huts and homesteads were abandoned as settlers trecked back East.⁵⁴ The crises in Europe was responsible for the increase in land values. Every year from 1910 to 1918, except the year 1915, had less than average rainfall.⁵⁵ Crops were poor but the selling price of grain was good. By 1920, the census of the county showed 7,123 inhabitants.

From 1920 to the present date, the population of the county has risen to a peak of 8,403 in 1932 and then fallen off abruptly during more prosperous years. Here we note a change in the general trend of population. Heretofore, the population of Ness County has tended to drop during economic crises but during the disasterous depression of the "thirties" a "back to the farm" movement may be noted. With the return of better times, many individuals have forsaken Ness County for more attractive positions in urban districts. Labor saving devices are replacing more and more farm laborers and, unless new urban enterprises are established, we may expect this trend in population to continue. This subject will be discussed more fully in the chapter dealing with the economic development of the county.

⁵⁴ Russell Lord, Men of Earth (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1931), pp. 274-275.

⁵⁵ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Report Number 285 of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1948), Et. passim.

Early Towns, Villages and Post Offices

In 1886 there were thirty-six post offices in Ness County,⁵⁶ but a modern map of the county shows only seven communities.⁵⁷ In searching the records, the author has uncovered more than fifty different towns that were planned or actually existed in Ness County. Many of these early towns were no more than a general store with a post office but a few were thriving communities. Most of them we may pass over but a few are worthy of mention.

Sidney

Located just one mile south of Ness City at the junction of the South Fork with the Walnut Creek, Sidney was a thriving town of one hundred fifty inhabitants.⁵⁸ The town was laid out on June 6, 1879⁵⁹ and named for Sidney, Iowa.⁶⁰ By 1880, the town could boast of a jewelry store, a general store, a cafe, a hotel, and a fine stone Masonic Hall. The Ness County Pioneer was published at Sidney and, later, the town became the home of The Advance and The Western Central Kansas Cowboy.

⁵⁶ The Walnut Valley Sentinel, July 31, 1886.

⁵⁷ The Hammond World Atlas (New York: C. S. Hammond and Company, 1953), p. 61.

⁵⁸ Kansas State Historical Society, op. cit., p. 470.

⁵⁹ Frank W. Blackmar, loc. cit.

⁶⁰ Kansas State Historical Society, loc. cit.

Sidney's chief asset was a plentiful supply of water. During the county seat fight, The Ness County Pioneer lost no opportunity to emphasize this asset. An example from the Pioneer follows:

A few reasons why Sidney was started and why she has steadily gained in popularity since she was started. . . . There were other towns building up, and it was understood they were started for the purpose of offering themselves for county seat; in fact were started for that very purpose; chosen at, or near the center of the county; but it was found that water could not be had of such quality and quantity as would warrant a town. Sidney was started on her present site about a year ago, after Ness City had been started long enough to be bored full of holes in search of water. People realize that even one or two good wells are not sufficient, every man who goes to town to do business, should have the assurance of water for the digging; this Sidney claims to have, her location near the creek, and on a good site insures her many friends. She does not go on false representation, does not blow and fret about matters, and is willing to be investigated on this as well as other matters.⁶¹

The loss of the county seat to Ness City was a staggering blow. The businessmen of Sidney gradually moved to Ness City and by 1886 there remained only the general store.⁶² The arrival of the railroad at Ness City in 1887 marked the end of the town. The stone store and the Masonic Hall were torn down, leaving a hole and a few stones to mark the spot.⁶³

Clarinda

Originally located on the northeast quarter of Section 24, Town 18, Range 24, Clarinda was surveyed March 25, 1879.⁶⁴ The original

⁶¹ The Ness County Pioneer, May 3, 1880.

⁶² The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 7, 1886.

⁶³ Kansas State Historical Society, op. cit., p. 471.

⁶⁴ A. T. Andreas, loc. cit.

town spread over 160 acres and boasted a dry goods store, a drug store, a grocery store, a hotel and a blacksmith shop. The first newspaper in Ness County, The Ness County Pioneer, was published at Clarinda until its removal to Sidney.⁶⁵

The town actually moved from place to place in search of water, and it was lack of water more than anything else that caused it to decline. The town ceased to exist after 1880.

Schoharie

Other than the short-lived settlement at Smallwood City, Schoharie was the oldest town in Ness County.⁶⁶ It was never a large town, having only a general store in which was published The Schoharie Globe. The paper was published until 1884 and the general store was still in use as late as 1886.⁶⁷

Harold

The town of Harold was a product of the land boom and the railroads. The town was founded in June of 1886 at a point just north of the Pawnee Creek and about twelve miles south of Ness City. By September, the town contained a hotel, feed store, general merchandise store, newspaper, and two churches.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ The Ness County Pioneer, September 29, 1879.

⁶⁶ The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 7, 1886.

⁶⁷ Loc. cit.

⁶⁸ The Harold Record, September 15, 1887.

It seemed certain that at least one railroad would pass through Harold, as may be seen from the following article:

Now that the Midland and Frisco road is knocking at our door, let [us] all unite and extend a welcome hand; with this running through the county on the south and the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic, running from McCracken to Garden City, the future of Harold and the southern part of Ness County is assured.⁶⁹

The collapse of the land market and the failure of the railroads to pass through spelled the doom of Harold, along with many other communities. Had the railroads been built, Harold might have become a thriving community but it was destined to become merely a name in the annals of history.

Ness City

The county seat was surveyed in 1878 by Richard Dighton.⁷⁰ The great force behind the town, however, was Ross Calhoun, who was the first person to build in Ness City.⁷¹ In fact, the town of Ness City was built upon a quarter section of land owned by Ross Calhoun.

The town did not spring into existence and immediately outdistance all rivals. By 1880 there were but eight houses in Ness City valued at about \$1,500. By the spring of 1884 there were no more than twenty but by August of 1886, there were 103 houses with others building.⁷²

⁶⁹ The Harold Boomer, July 21, 1887.

⁷⁰ A. T. Andreas, loc. cit.

⁷¹ The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 14, 1886.

⁷² The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 21, 1886.

The city showed a remarkable growth after the railroad was built. Other towns simply moved to Ness City to continue their business.

Bazine

Bazine, located on the Walnut Creek in the eastern section of Ness County, is the oldest town still in existence today. The town received its name at the hands of a French pioneer who named it in honor of a French war marshal.⁷³

The Santa Fe Railway was built through Bazine in 1886. The depot was built a half-mile south of old Bazine and the town was then moved to its present site. The railway was the making of the town, and Bazine, no longer an inland city, made rapid and progressive strides. New houses and stores were built, streets were laid out and Bazine quickly grew into a recognized trading community.

During the late "eighties" the citizens of Bazine hoped to see their town grow into a great railroad and manufacturing center. The March 1, 1889 issue of The Bazine Leader stated that Bazine was "promised a sugar factory within the next twelve months."⁷⁴ This same paper referred to Bazine as "a great railroad center."⁷⁵ The following was printed in the March 22, 1889 issue of that paper.

Bazine has already one railroad and before another year two more grand trunk lines will have been completed. The Omaha, Dodge

⁷³ The Ness County News, August 17, 1939.

⁷⁴ The Bazine Leader, March 1, 1889.

⁷⁵ The Bazine Leader, March 22, 1889.

City and Southern which has been surveyed through town and work begun on the eastern end, and the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic which will without a doubt be extended across from Larned through Bazine and a junction formed with the Missouri Pacific at Utica thereby making Bazine the largest railroad center in the county.⁷⁶

After the railroad deals fell apart, Bazine refused to die and today, Bazine is one of the more progressive towns in Ness County.

Beeler

Beeler is located in the western part of the county on the Santa Fe Railway. Even before the railroad was put through, Beeler boasted three grocery stores, two drug stores, a soft drinks and cigar store run by Bert Gee, a negro gentleman, and a hotel. The hotel was a large stone building owned by Bolivar Beeler, after whom the town was named.⁷⁷

Beeler has declined until at the present time it is only a shell of its former self. The predominance of larger cities to the east and west leaves little hope that it will ever be much larger than it is at present.

Ransom

Ransom, in the north central section of Ness County, was platted in 1889 by the Denver and Memphis Town Company on a quarter section of land owned by William A. Ogden. The land was formerly school land, having been purchased from the State in 1888 by Gus Fields who soon

⁷⁶ The Bazine Leader, March 22, 1889.

⁷⁷ The Ness County News, August 17, 1924.

after sold it to Ogden. The town was originally named Ogdenburg but the name had to be changed in order to secure a post office as a town in eastern Kansas had a similar name.

Utica

Utica is a true railroad town. When the railroad was built through the county in 1887, the town of Utica was platted by the Denver-Rio Grande Townsite Company. Actually, a community had been established before this time and was located one and three quarters miles southwest of the present site.⁷⁸ When the railroad was built, this town moved to its present location on the railroad.

A trunk line was to run from Utica, through Bazine, and on to Larned; and Utica was to be a division point on the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic (Missouri Pacific). Having received the railroad's promise that their city would be made a division point if they would subscribe enough funds, the Uticans agreed to provide the necessary funds. While the subscriptions were being collected, the railroad company put in a turntable, built a roundhouse and drove in a spur. They ran one engine on the turntable, turned it around, and that was the last time the turntable was ever used. After collecting all of the subscription money, the railway company tore down the roundhouse and took it to Horace, in Greeley County.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ The Utica Star-Courier, July 14, 1932.

⁷⁹ The Ness County News, August 17, 1929.

Brownell

The town of Brownell, in the north central part of the county, was laid out by the Memphis and Denver Town Company and named for a railroad attorney, F. R. Brownell.⁸⁰ The town owes its existence to the Missouri Pacific Railroad which came through in the spring of 1887. In 1925, Brownell reached its peak with a population of 202. Since that time, the population has fluctuated, but over a period of years there has been a decrease.

Arnold

Arnold, a small village in the northwestern section of the county, has a population of approximately sixty-five. It is located on the Missouri Pacific Railroad and is a short distance north of Highway K-4. Arnold has never been much larger than it is at the present time, and the facts concerning its early history are very obscure. As nearly as can be ascertained, Arnold was founded in 1902 and named after its founder, J. G. Arnold.⁸¹ The town is located just six miles from Ransom and seven miles from Utica. The proximity of these larger towns belies any hope that Arnold will ever be much larger than it is at present.

⁸⁰ The Ness County News, March 7, 1920.

⁸¹ Charles G. Wolfe, "The Evolution of Educational Opportunities in Ness County, Kansas," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 1950, p. 75.

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture

The early years of Ness County were years of experimentation. There were no experiment stations or colleges to tell the early pioneer what crops are adaptable. The early settler was forced to rely on his own initiative and, by a process of trial and error, find a crop that was adaptable to his environment. What farmer today would consider growing sugar cane as a cash crop! Yet, in 1889, The Bazine Leader stated that "there should be five to eight sugar factories in every county in western Kansas" and that "the production of sugar will be the salvation of the plains country."¹

By 1900, government projects, both state and national, whose purpose was to help the farmers find a good cash crop, were in operation. By 1905 the farmers were generally convinced that sugar sorghum was not an ideal crop but wheat was still not accepted as the best crop for the plains. It was in 1908 that Professor M. L. Bowman of Iowa State College and a former Reno County farmer stated: "If I were drinking a toast to the crops of Kansas, I think it might well be to King Corn and Queen Alfalfa."²

¹ The Bazine Leader, March 1, 1889.

² Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Seventeenth Biennial Report (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1908), p. 38.

Mr. Bowman could back up his belief with statistics for, in 1907, the valuation of the corn crop amounted to 55.8 per cent of the total value of all cereal crops produced in Kansas that year.³ It is to the credit of the farmers of Ness County that, in 1907, the county income from wheat production was 28.1 per cent greater than the income from corn production.

From 1885 to 1890, the farmer could easily obtain money to develop his land. The Larned Bank even advertised "2 million to lend on Ness County land."⁴ Interest rates were high, 9 per cent on mortgages and as high as 375 per cent on chattle mortgages,⁵ and, during this era of general optimism and prosperity, many Ness County farmers availed themselves of bank credit.

The depression came suddenly in 1890. Just how many Ness County farmers lost their farms is not known but there were undoubtedly many casualties. For the state as a whole, about 10,600 farms were lost in 1890 alone.⁶

The invention of new farm machinery that will allow intensive cultivation of a larger area has increased the average size of the farms of Ness County and, at the same time, reduced the number of farm laborers needed.

³ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴ The Ness County News, September 18, 1886.

⁵ William E. Connelly, History of Kansas (Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc., 1928), II, p. 1157.

⁶ Loc. cit.

A reversal of the trend toward fewer and larger farms occurred in 1953. Records show that there were eighteen fewer farms in 1952 than in 1953.⁷ It is, of course, too early to say that this indicates a trend toward smaller farms in the county.

Several factors may account for this reversal of trend. The death of large land holders could account for additional farms. For example, the owner of a large farm may, in his will, divide his farm among four or five children; thus, three or four new farms are created. Another factor is that the high prices and government supports have made small scale farming more attractive and remunerative so fewer farmers of small acreages are selling their holdings. Finally, since small scale farming is more attractive than in the past, large land holders may be finding a market for part of their holdings and selling to people who are not already engaged in farming in Ness County.

During the dust storms of the "thirties," the Ness County Soil Conservation District was formed. This is a legal organization of farmers and landowners through which assistance may be secured in planning and application of sound land use, conservation and management of farms in the district.⁸ This organization has been instrumental in helping individual farmers and ranchers to develop sound plans of land use, soil conservation and soil management.

⁷ The Hutchinson News-Herald, May 31, 1953.

⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperating, Physical Land Conditions Affecting Use, Conservation, and Management of Land Resources, Ness County, Kansas (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 20.

From aerial photographs taken in October, 1938 and checked with AAA records in 1945, the United States Department of Agriculture has presented the following facts:

There have been 41,388 acres of land that are not suitable for cultivation broken out of sod. This land should be returned to some kind of permanent vegetation. There are over 147,000 acres now in native pasture or grassland that are classed as suitable for cultivation. Some of these areas occur as small, widely scattered tracts or are included within large pasture areas that would be unsuitable for cultivation; however, many of them could be broken out to replace some of the land that should be retired.

Of the land in cultivation which is suitable for continuous cultivation, 130,300 acres need simple or easily applied practices for erosion control and fertility maintenance. If continuous cultivation is to be carried out successfully, 219,586 acres need intensive or complex practices. Approximately 5,260 acres that are in cultivation are suitable for only limited or occasional cultivation even with the use of complex or intensive practices.

Land use in Ness County according to measurements of aerial photographs of the 1938 flights include 396,563 acres in cultivation; 272,046 acres in native pasture or grassland; towns, schools, churches and urban areas included 1,701 acres; roads, farmsteads, etc. included 17,669 acres; lakes, rivers and streams and other drainage areas occupied 3,861 acres.⁹

In using the land in Ness County, the progressive farmer must take into consideration the seasonal distribution of moderately low rainfall, the texture and depth of the soil, erosion hazards and crop adaptations. The primary steps to be undertaken in the use of land in Ness County are:

Putting each piece of land, so far as practicable, to its best use to get the most from the land for the longest period of time with the least loss of natural resources.

The using of fertility maintenance practices, including crop rotations, that will improve or maintain the productive capacity of each piece of land. The choice of practices is dependent upon

⁹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

the use to be made of the land and the characteristics of the land type.

The control of runoff water to reduce erosion on fields and pastures where this type of erosion is encountered. This may be achieved by (a) providing mechanical and vegetative measures for reducing the rate and volume of runoff water below erosive and flood levels; (b) providing vegetated waterways to prevent gully erosion and protect stream banks during periods of excess runoff; (c) drainage of low lying or slowly drained lands; and (d) using such practices as will increase water penetration into the soil and store it for use by crops.

The use of safeguards against wind erosion that will insure adequate protection of the land from the destructive forces of wind during critical times by (a) proper conservation of crop residues; (b) use of timely tillage and moisture conservation practices; (c) on areas that may be affected by wind erosion, the use of alternate parallel strips of small grain and row crops across the direction of prevailing wind.

The reorganization where necessary from the present type of farming to one that fits the capabilities of the land and provides sufficient income for the farm family.¹⁰

Income from Farm Products

The graphs following this section are designed to show the income from the principal farm products of Ness County for the years that records have been kept.

The graphs picture the uncertain income of the Ness County farmer and provide a good index to the prosperity of the county. As accurate instruments, however, their value is questionable due to the necessity of using an extremely large interval. Thus, small changes in income are not as readily apparent as large changes. It should also be remembered that the inflated value of the dollar has caused the

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

income to jump markedly. Still, if we consider our present dollar to be worth only fifty cents, the wealth of the Ness County farmer is greater than ever before.

Wheat

The year 1890 may be said to be the year when wheat was accepted by Ness County farmers as the best money crop. Prior to that time, the acreages devoted to corn and to sugar sorghum exceeded that planted in wheat. Except for the year 1884, corn and sorghum had grown well and in 1890 the farmers planted large acreages to sugar sorghum believing that they could market their product at Ness City where the largest sugar mill in the world was being built.

The year 1890, however, was not one of the years conducive to the growth of sugar cane. A bountiful yield was reaped from the fields planted to wheat, but the corn and sorghum withered in the fields. When fire destroyed the Ness County Sugar Mill that same year, there remained little incentive for the farmer to plant more sorghum except to be used as feed for livestock or to be marketed for that purpose.

The income from wheat exceeded one million dollars for the first time in 1903. This record crop was not equaled until 1914 when the income exceeded two and one-half million dollars. This record was broken in 1919 and again in 1920 when the income neared four and one-half million dollars. Since 1944, incomes in excess of five million dollars have been common and a record income of nearly fourteen million dollars resulted from the crop of 1947. Statistics are not available as yet

but the 1952 crop of over six million bushels is certain to provide an income far in excess of the record crop of 1947.

The dust-bowl days of the 1930's resulted in low yields at a time when the selling price of grain was poor. The year 1935 was the lowest income producing year since 1911 when another great drought caused a failure.

From the graphs showing the income from wheat production may be read the prosperity of the county. The income from meat animals and other commodities means much to the Ness County farmer but the income from wheat has been, in recent years, nearly double the income from all other farm produce and crops.

Sorghum

As mentioned previously, sugar sorghum was a leading crop until 1900. From that time to the present, by far the majority of that grown has been feed sorghum for livestock. Sorghum has become the number two money crop in Ness County and in 1950 the income from the crop amounted to more than one million dollars.

Much of the sorghum grown in Ness County is not sold but is used as livestock feed. We must, therefore, consider the total value of the sorghum crop to be much higher than that represented by the figures on income.

Barley

The income from barley has been quite uncertain as may be seen by glancing at the graphs showing the income from this commodity. Very

little was grown until 1892 when the income exceeded \$100,000. In 1919 the crop exceeded \$275,000 and in 1923 the value of the crop reached an all time high of \$424,818. This represented nearly four times the value of the wheat crop for that particular year.

Oats

The income from oat production has fluctuated much the same as the income from barley. The climate of Ness County is usually unfavorable for large oat production so the area seeded to oats is relatively small. The greatest income from oat production was in 1919 when that income amounted to \$269,465.

Corn

Before 1890, corn was one of the two leading crops of Ness County. In 1890, however, practically no corn was harvested and yields remained small until 1908 when the income topped \$250,000. In 1926, the income from corn production amounted to \$525,099; the record income for that product. Very little corn has been grown in Ness County since the dust-bowl days. The greatest production since 1935 was in 1944 and that amounted to only \$37,630 in value.

Rye

Rye grows well in Ness County but the demand for that commodity is not great. An income of \$58,880 in 1891 represents the record for this cereal grain. Since 1920, the income from rye production has been

negligible. Few wheat farmers will grow rye because wheat grown on ground recently planted to rye will be "docked" when the wheat is marketed due to a high rye content. For this reason, rye will never be a major crop in Ness County unless, for some remote and unforeseen reason, the market for rye should surpass that of wheat.

Potatoes

Although not a major crop in Ness County at the present time, potatoes have grown well and offer a potential source of income, especially where irrigation is employed. In 1887, potatoes supplied the farmer with an income of \$36,880--second only to sugar sorghum as an income producing crop. In 1929, a record crop produced an income of \$44,805. Since 1929 the income has fallen off and now represents a very small income to the Ness County farmer.

Meat Production

Meat production accounts for a greater share of the increased wealth of the county than any other commodity. In 1919, the income from this commodity amounted to \$344,698. This was the record until 1929 when the county realized \$1,247,358 from its meat animals. The income slipped during the thirties but at no time was the income less than that of 1919. Since 1940, the income from the counties meat production has increased by more than six times and a record high of \$3,702,860 was recorded in 1950. The break in the cattle market in 1952 will result in less income from meat production but the value of

this commodity will still be greatly in excess of that realized in any one year prior to 1942.

Poultry and Eggs

The income from poultry and eggs remained fairly constant until the early 1940's when that income more than tripled the income of any previous year. In the record year of 1945, that income amounted to \$673,300.

Milk Production

The income from milk production has also shown a great increase during the 1940's. The record income was recorded in 1946 and amounted to \$495,600. This represents an increase in income of more than twice that of any year prior to 1940. This increase is due solely to a better selling price and not to increased production of milk. The graph depicting the trends in livestock in Ness County shows that the number of milk cows in the county has remained fairly constant and in recent years has actually decreased.

Alfalfa

Alfalfa today is the third most important crop grown in Ness County and results in an annual income of close to \$100,000. Most of this crop is grown on bottom land along the Pawnee and Walnut Creek where water is found in sufficient quantities for irrigation.

A new variety of alfalfa, "creeping alfalfa," is being grown on test plots in the northern part of Ness County. If this variety

proves itself adaptable to the more arid regions of the county, the growing of alfalfa as a money crop will be accelerated.

Wool Clip

Although the county is suitable for the raising of sheep, wool clip has never ranked high as an income producing commodity. The average annual income from this source is less than \$3,000 and in 1948, the record year, the income amounted to only \$11,170.

Turkeys

In 1942, the income from this source amounted to \$47,040 and the average annual income since 1940 is close to \$30,000. At the present time, turkey raising, except on a very small scale, is confined to a few farms. Here is a potential source of income for the Ness County farmer who is willing to expend the time and effort necessary to raise turkeys.

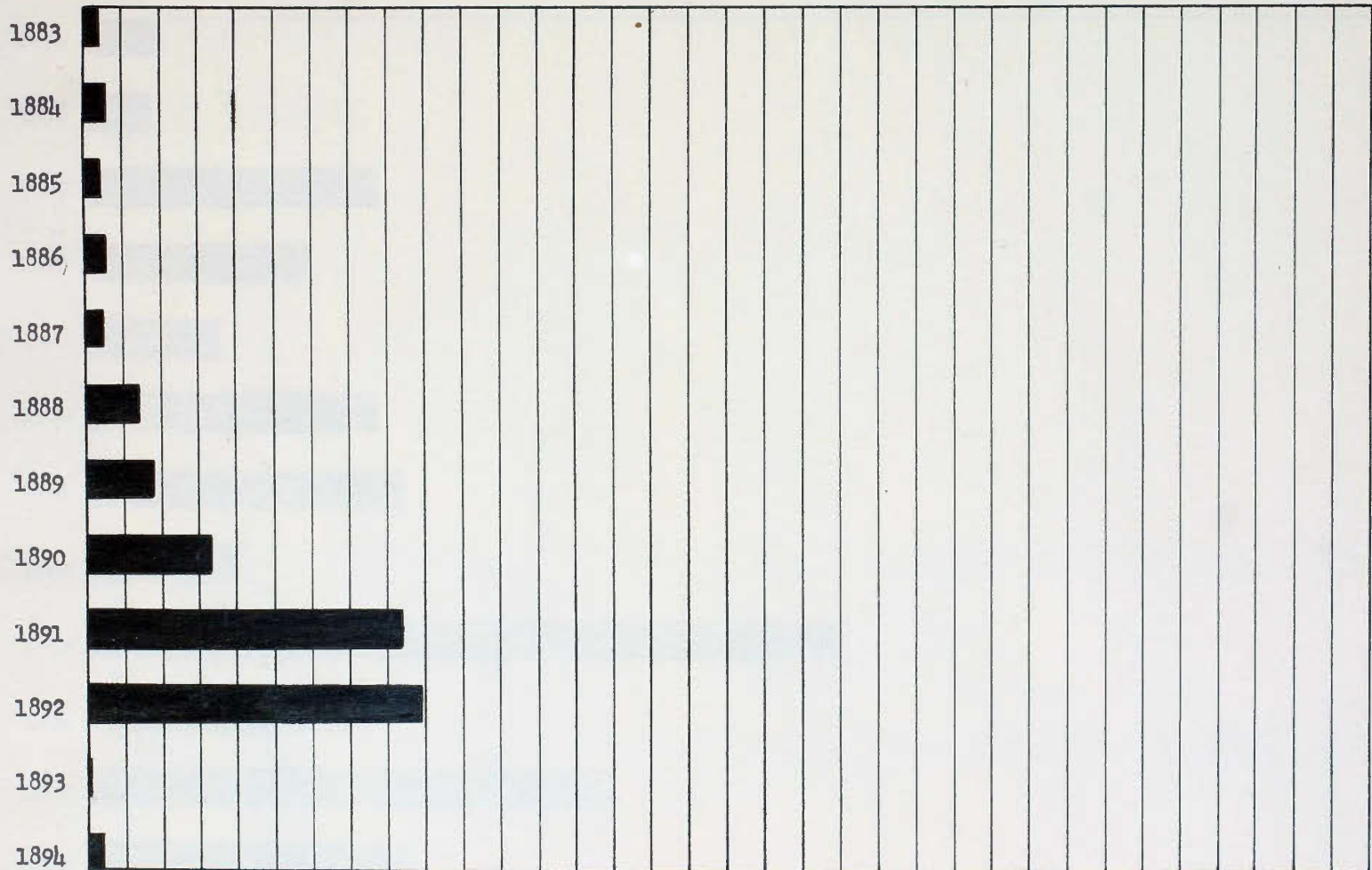
Minor Crops

Sugar beets will grow in Ness County and do especially well on irrigated bottom land. The income from this source, however, has never exceeded \$1,000. Other minor crops grown and marketed include clover, flax, apples, peaches, pears, and grapes, but their total value is small and seldom exceeds \$750. A few farmers, chiefly in the Pawnee and Walnut Creek watersheds where alfalfa is grown, keep bees and market the honey. This provides an additional source of income but, taking the county as a whole, the amount is insignificant.

FIGURE II*

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950 (8 pages)

■ = \$50,000



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE II - page 2

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

■ = \$50,000

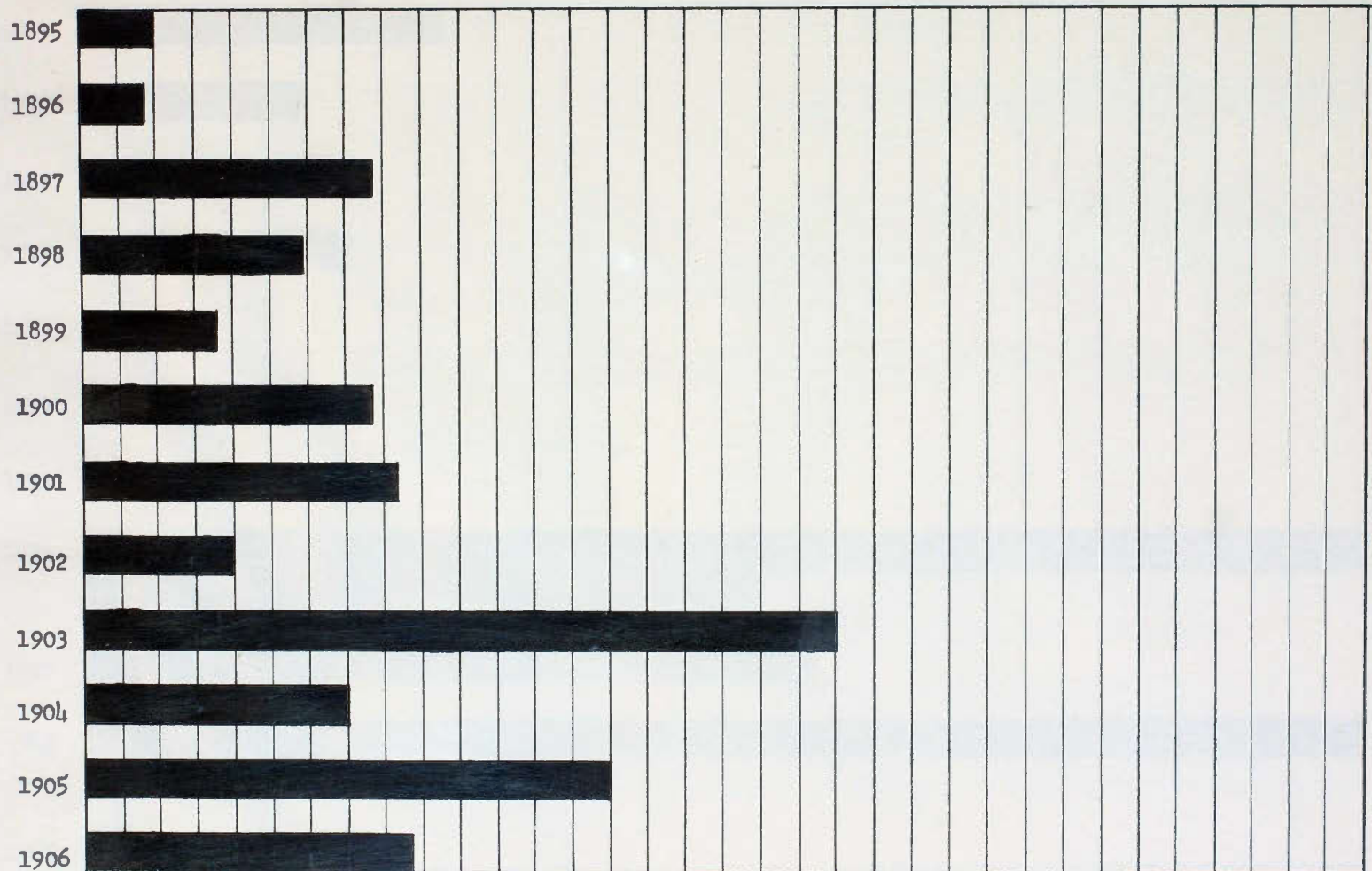


FIGURE II - page 3

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County
Kansas, 1883-1950

■ = \$50,000

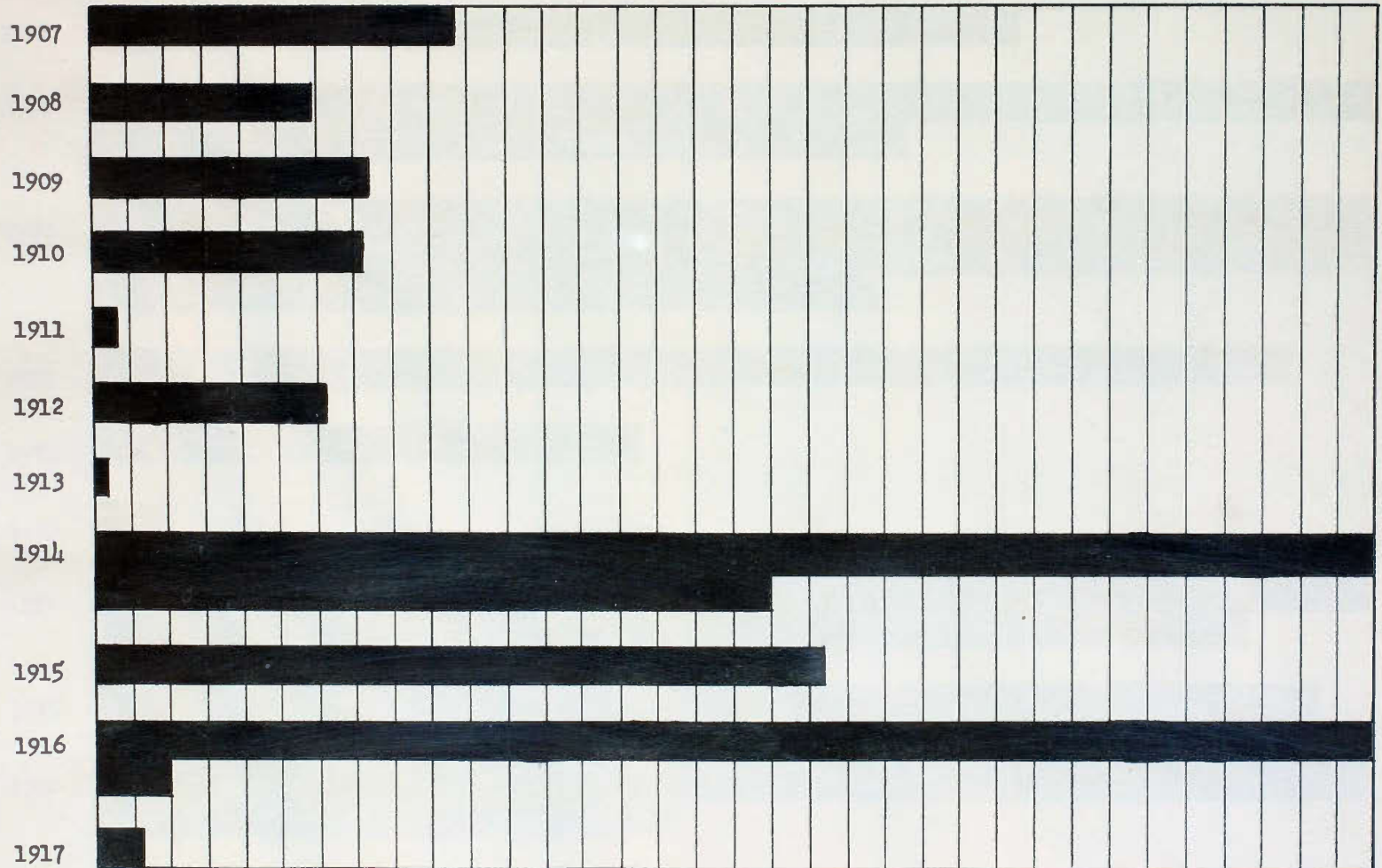


FIGURE II - page 4

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

■ = \$50,000

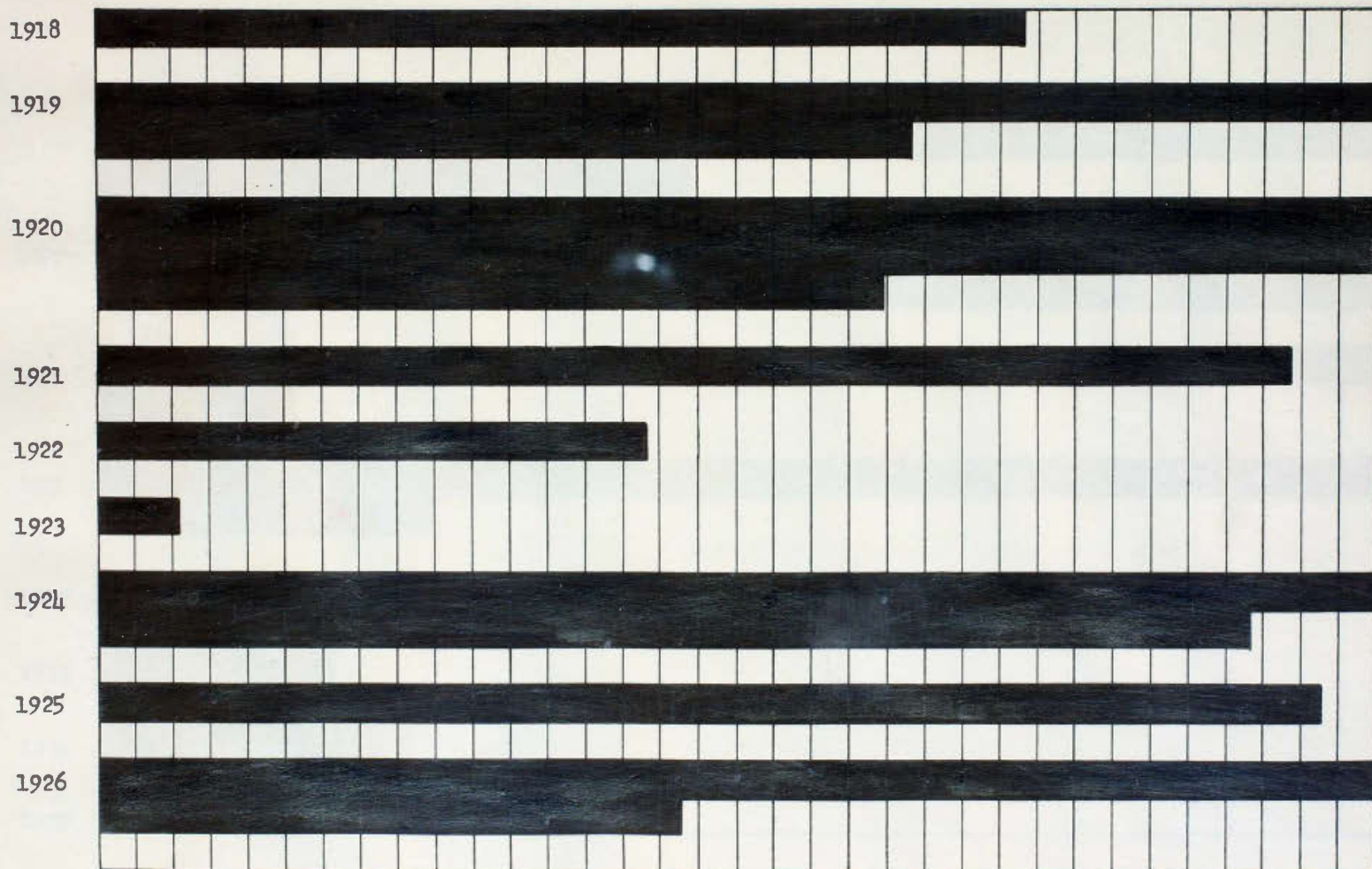


FIGURE II - page 5

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

■ = \$50,000

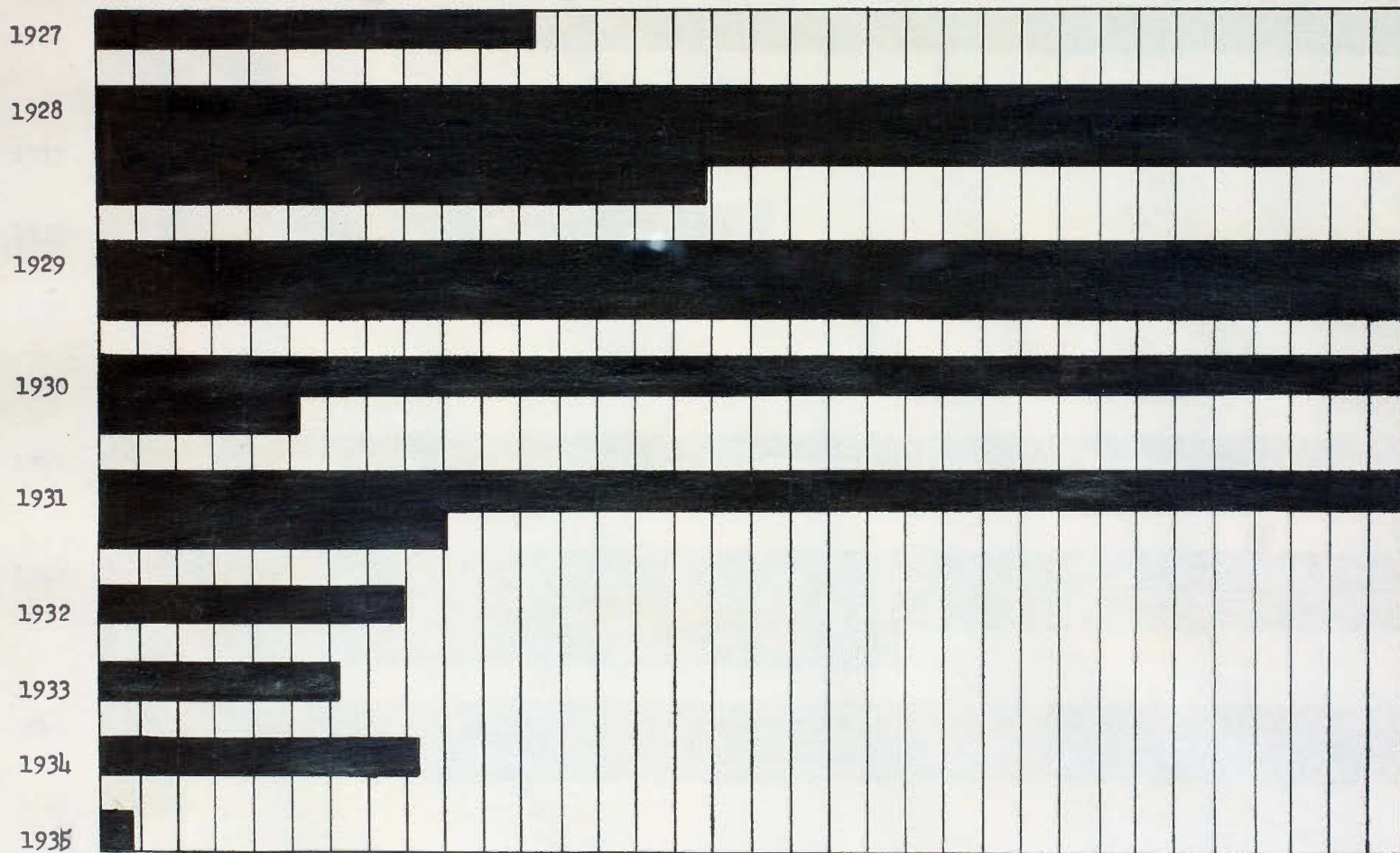


FIGURE II - page 6

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

■ = \$50,000



FIGURE II - page 7

■ = \$50,000

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

1944

1945

1946

1947

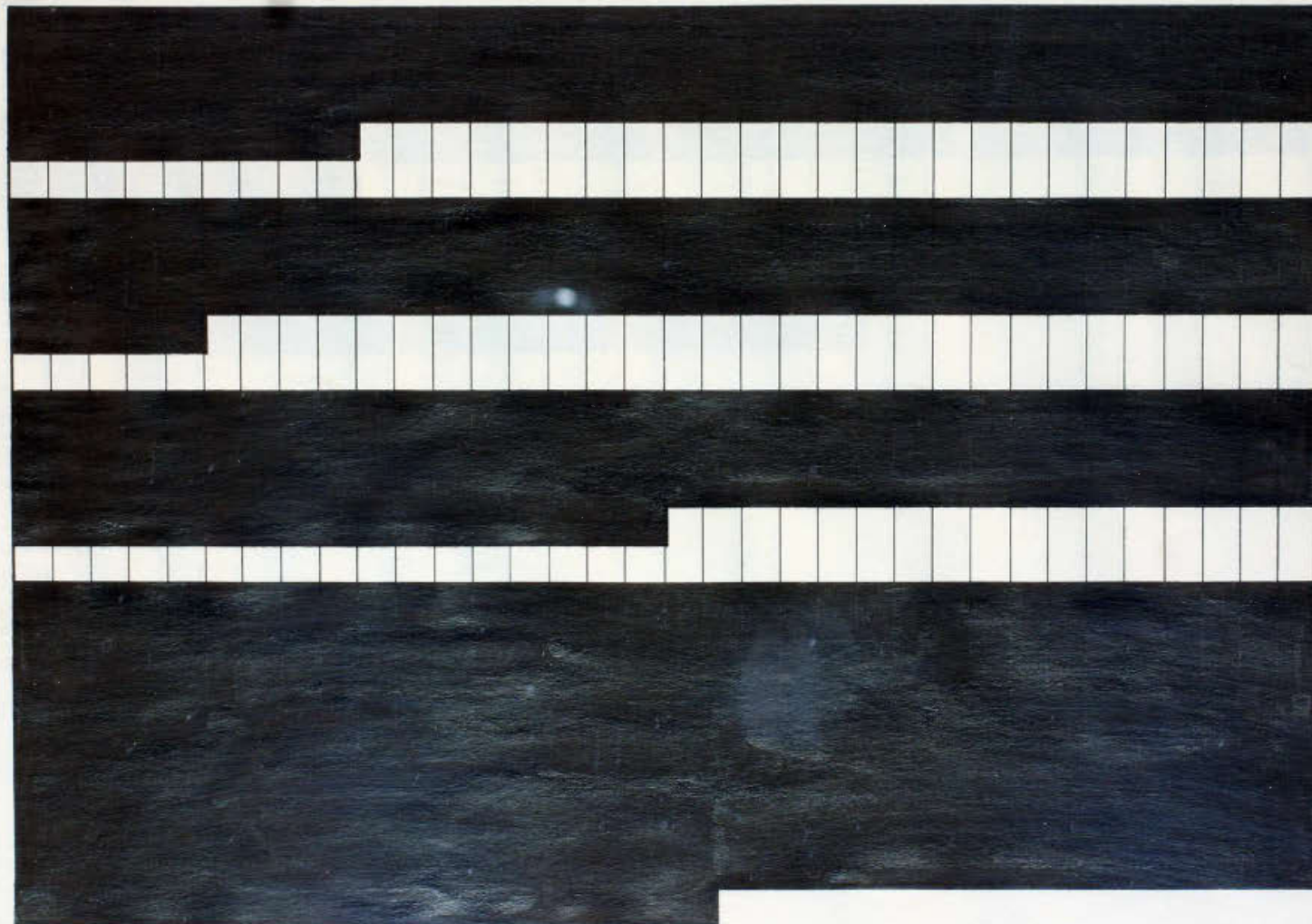


FIGURE II - page 8

Income from Wheat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

■ = \$50,000

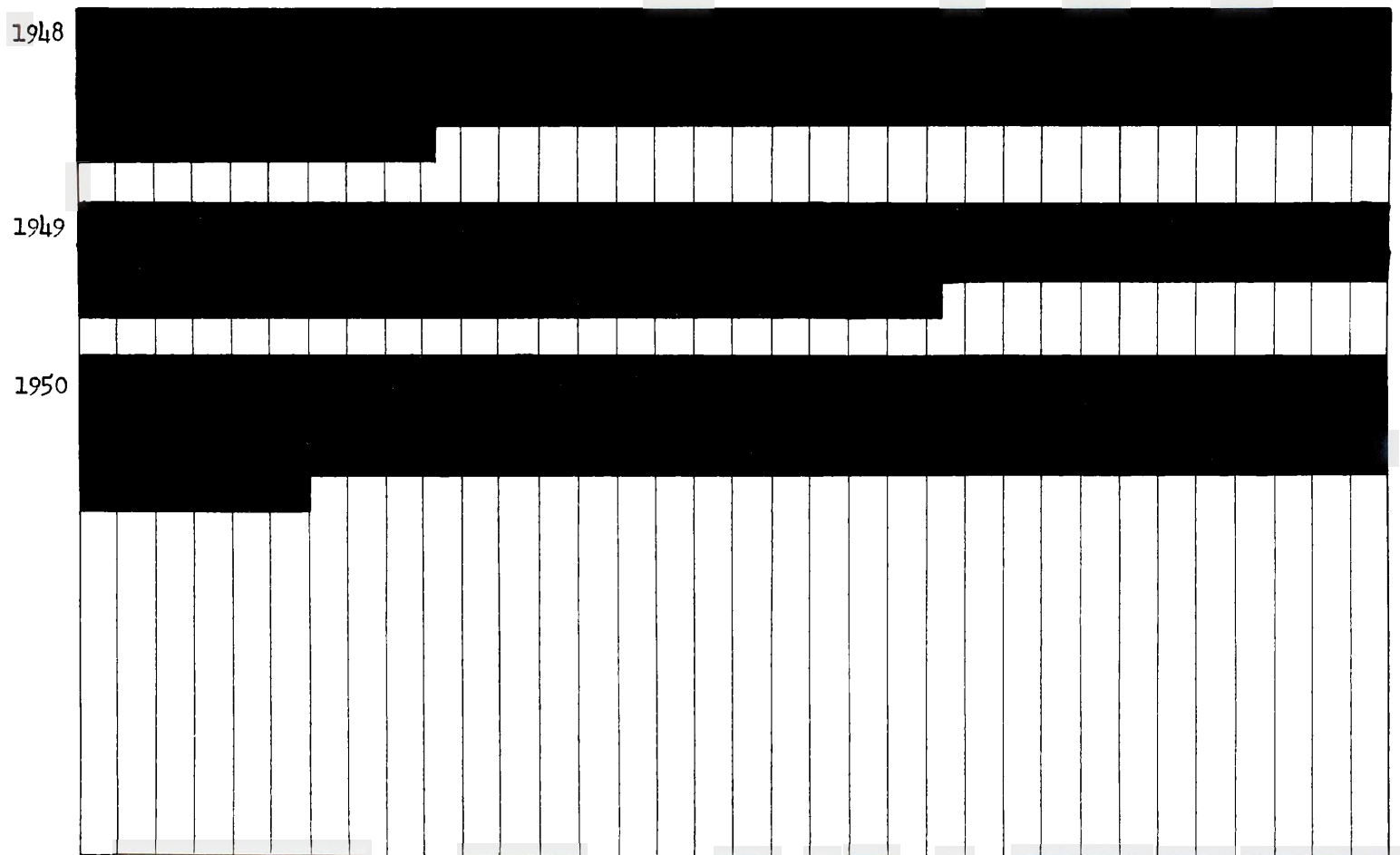
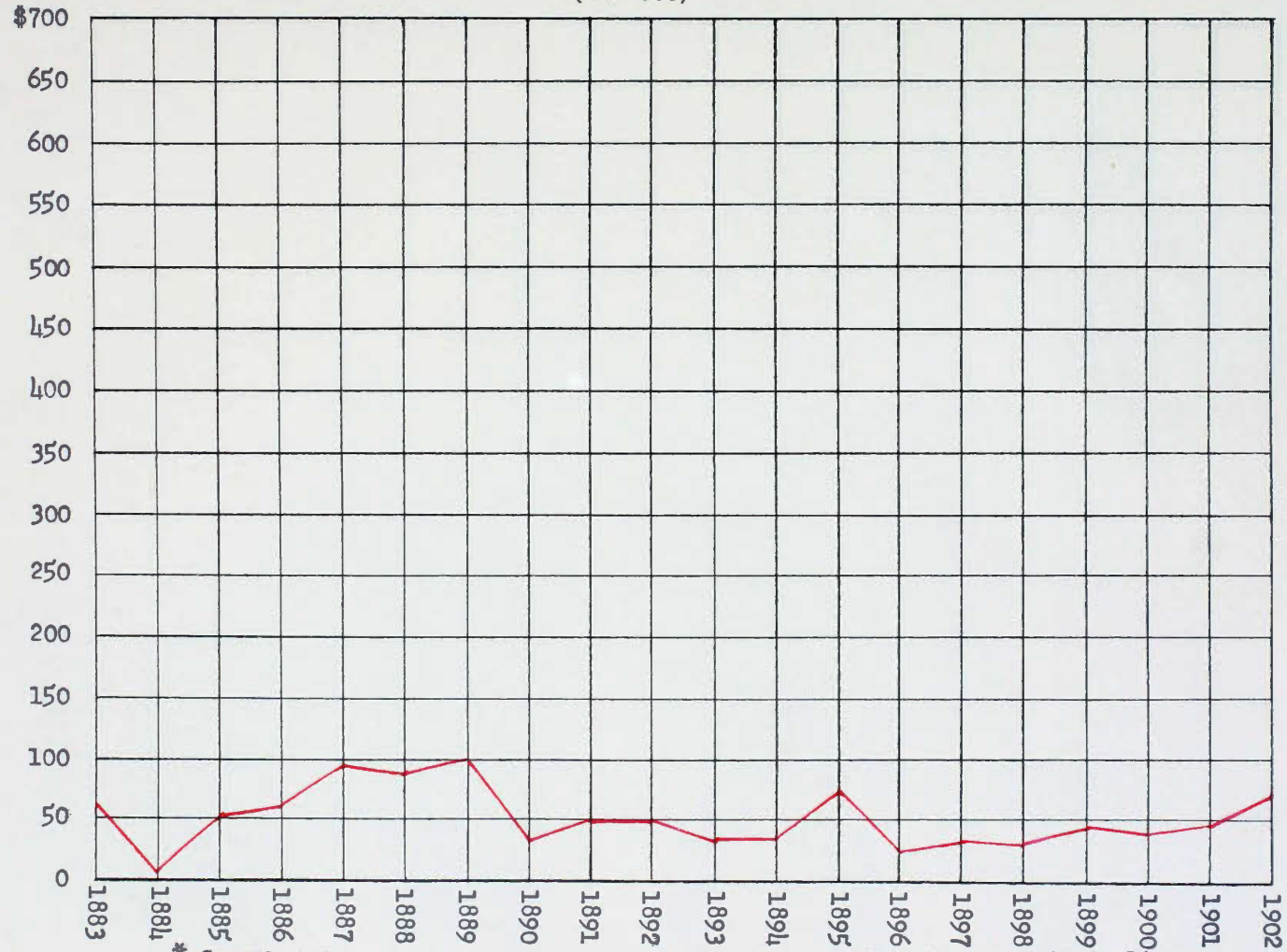


FIGURE III*

Income from Sorghum Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950 (4 pages)
(add 000)



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE III - page 2
Income from Sorghum Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

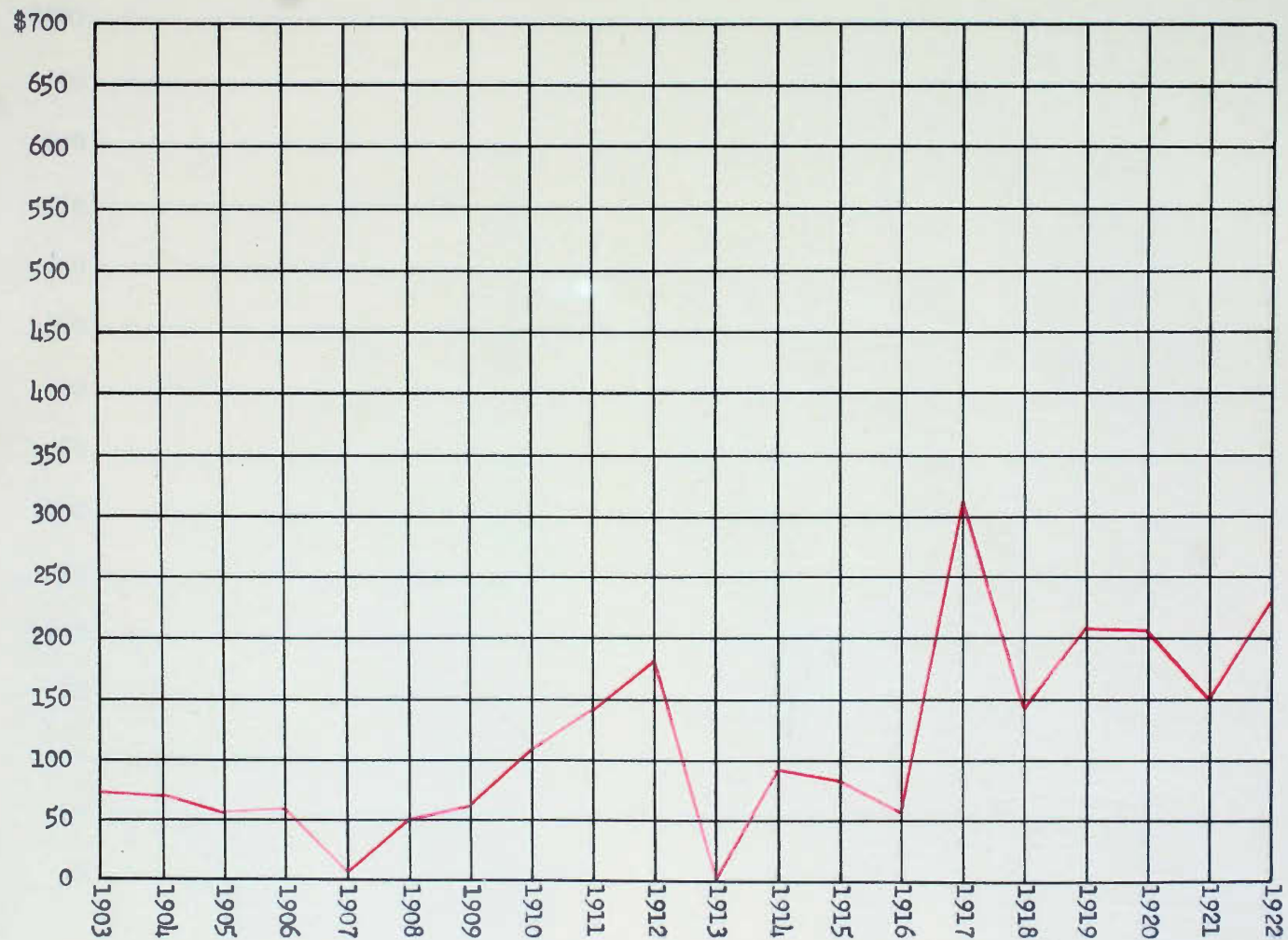


FIGURE III - page 3
Income from Sorghum Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

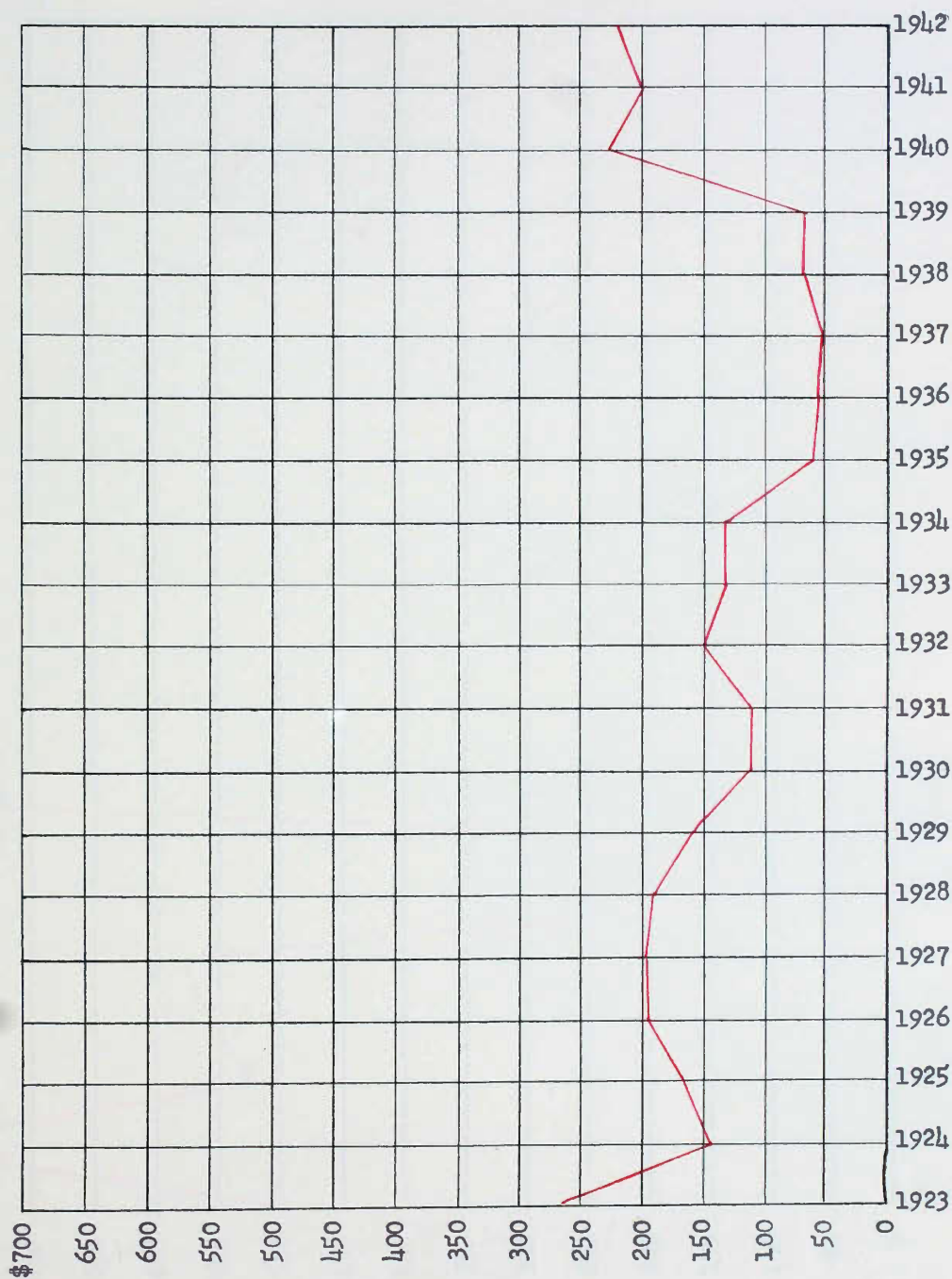


FIGURE III - page 4
Income from Sorghum Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

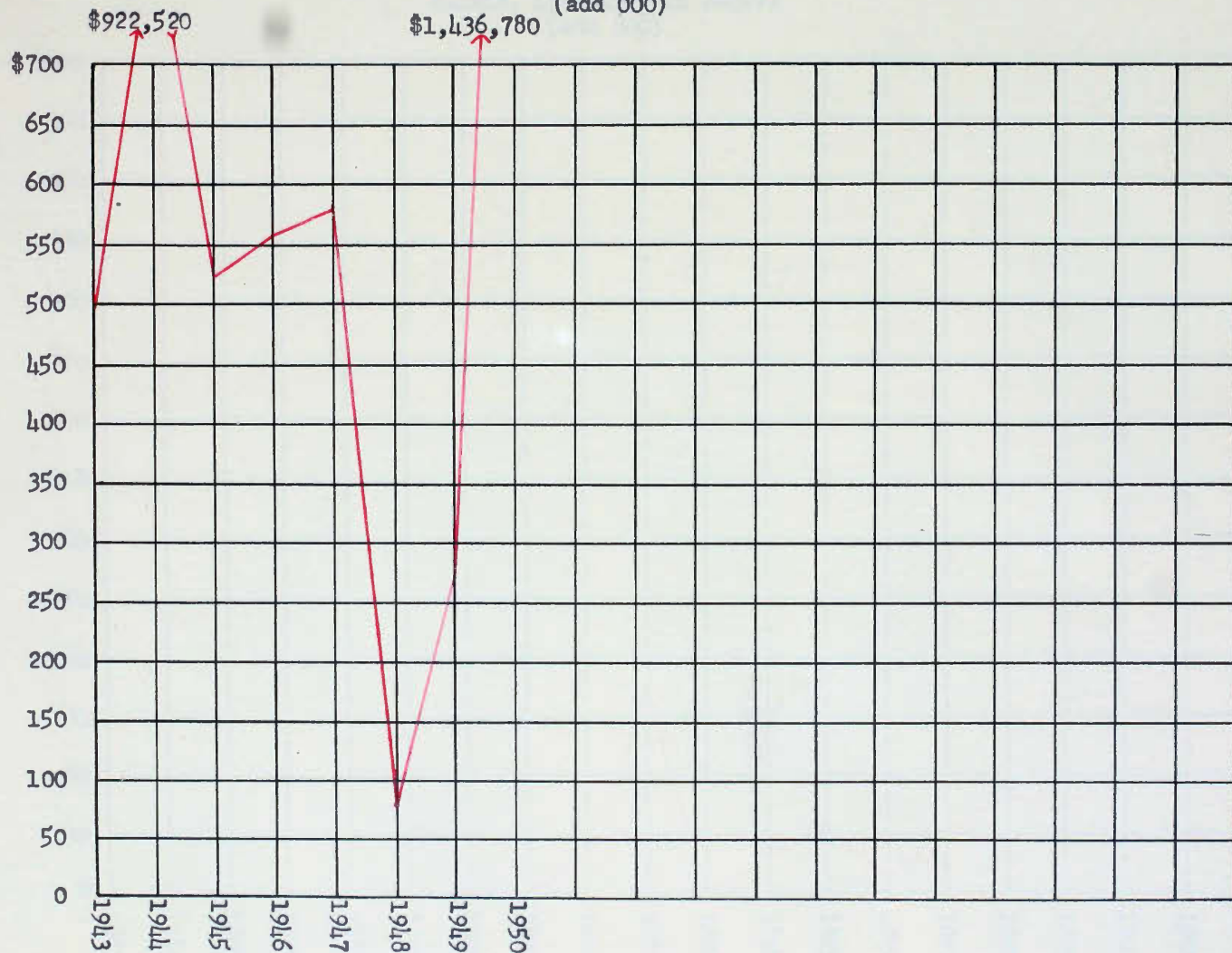


FIGURE IV - page 2
Income from Barley Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

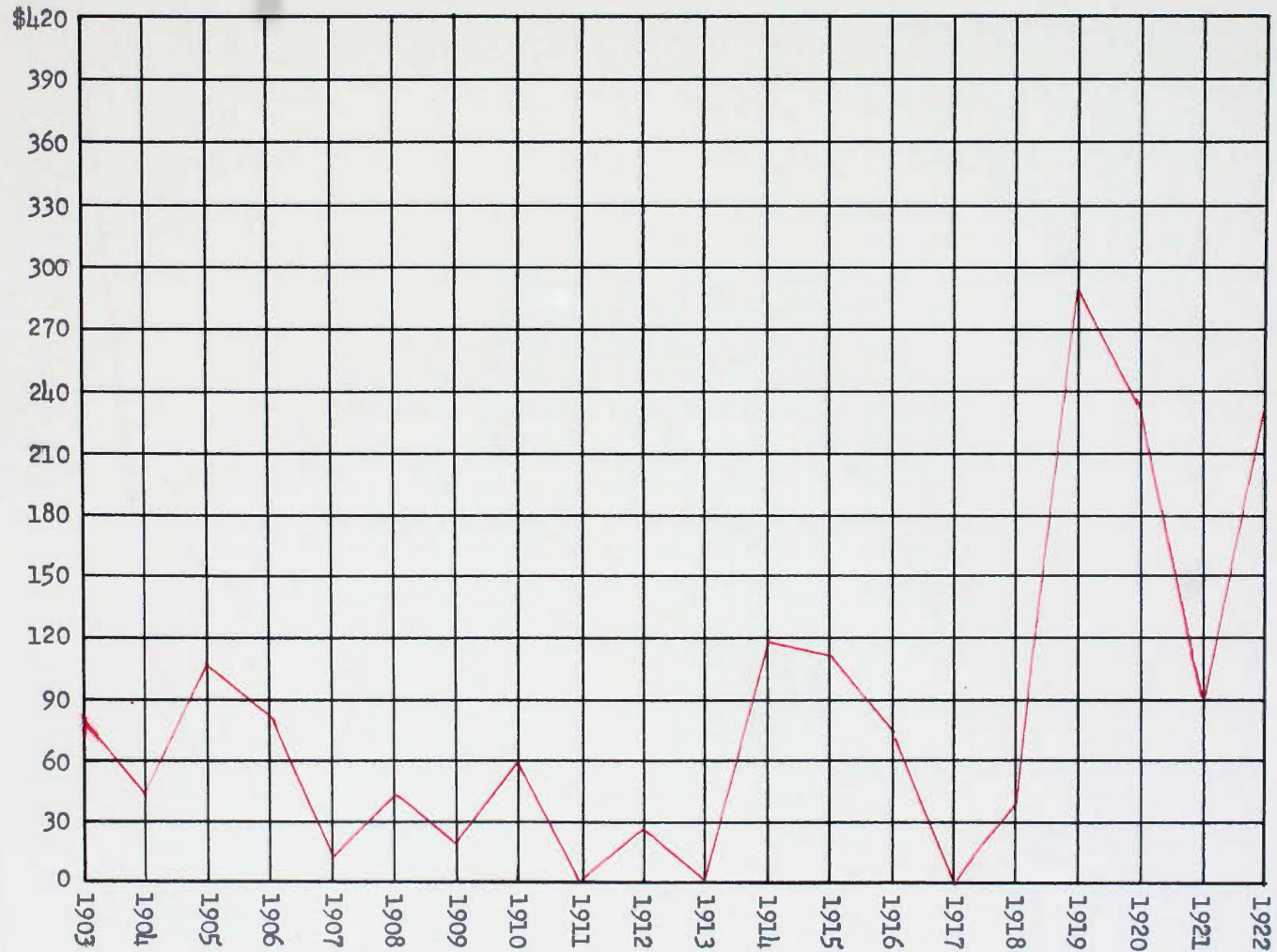


FIGURE IV - page 3
Income from Barley Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

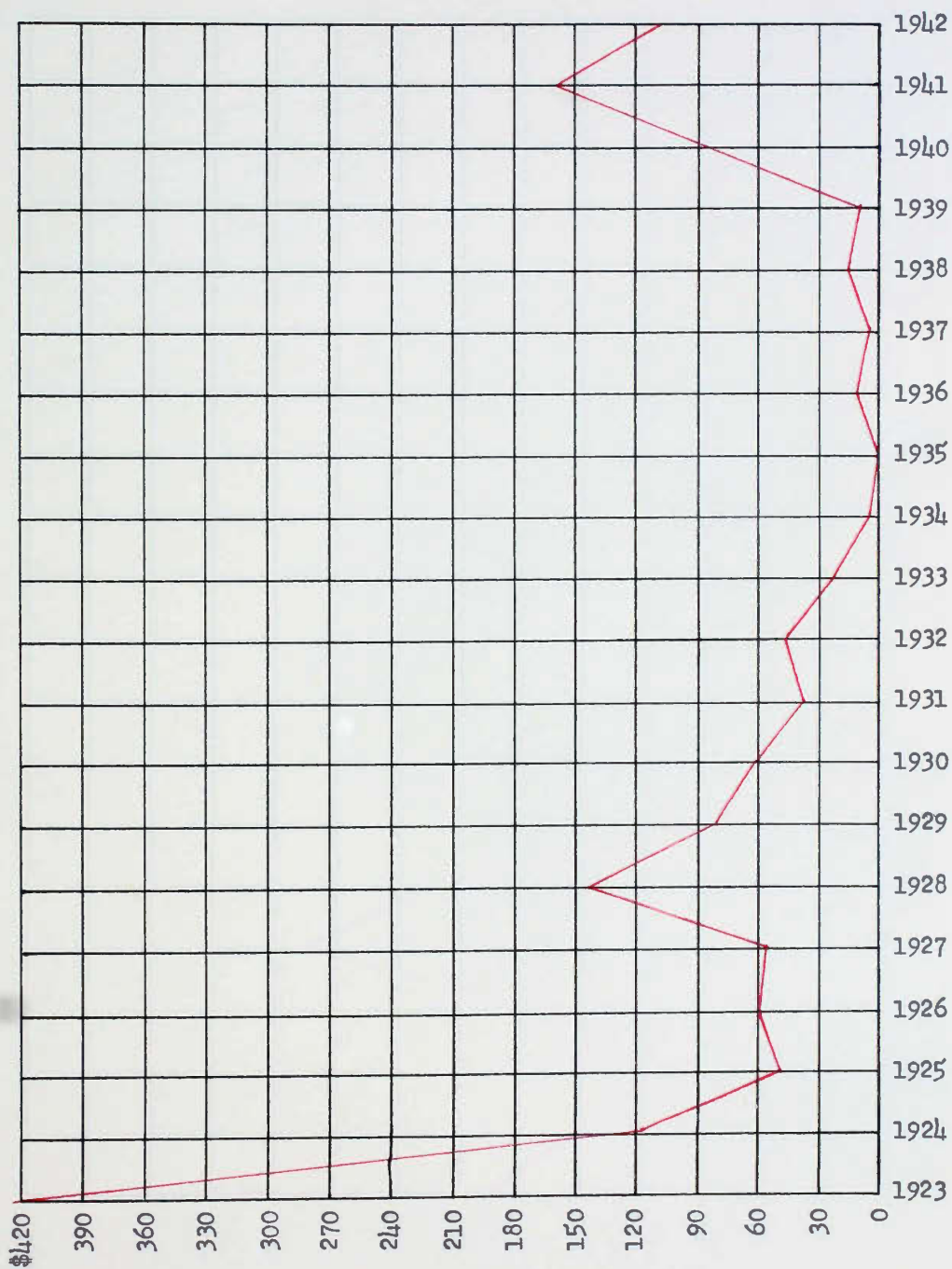


FIGURE IV - page 4
Income from Barley Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

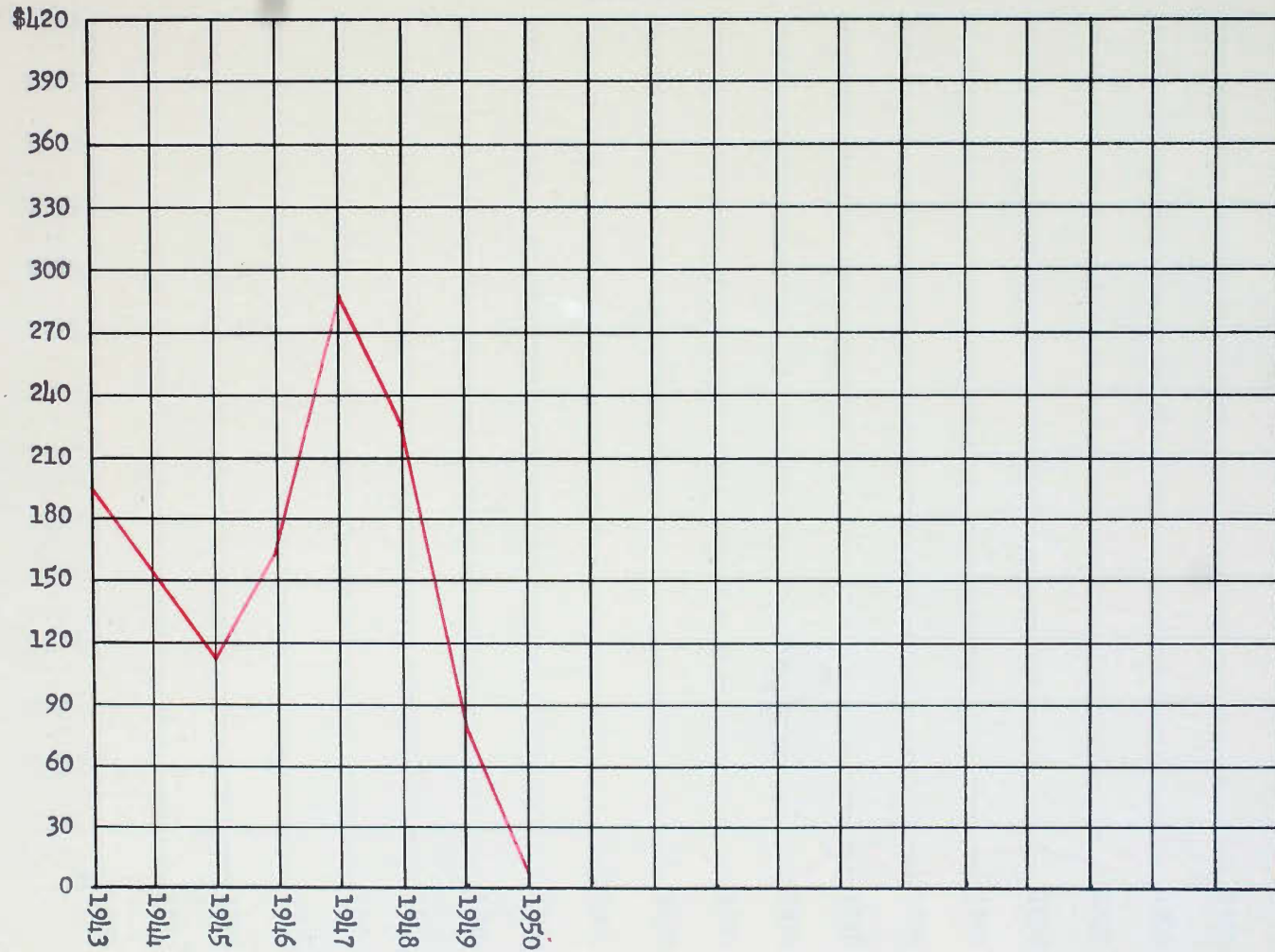


FIGURE V*

Income from Oat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950 (4 pages)
(add 00)

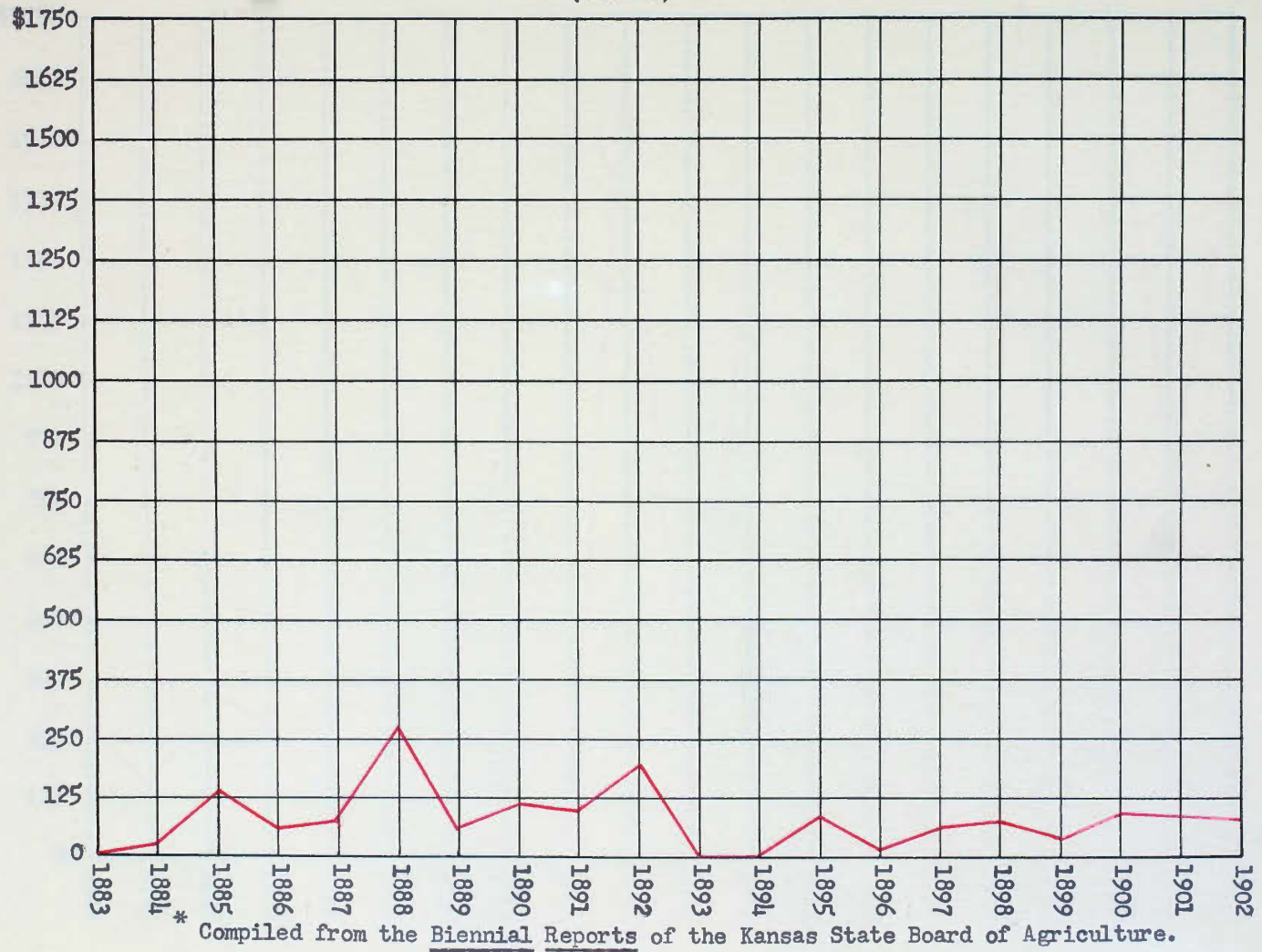


FIGURE V - page 2
Income from Oat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 00)

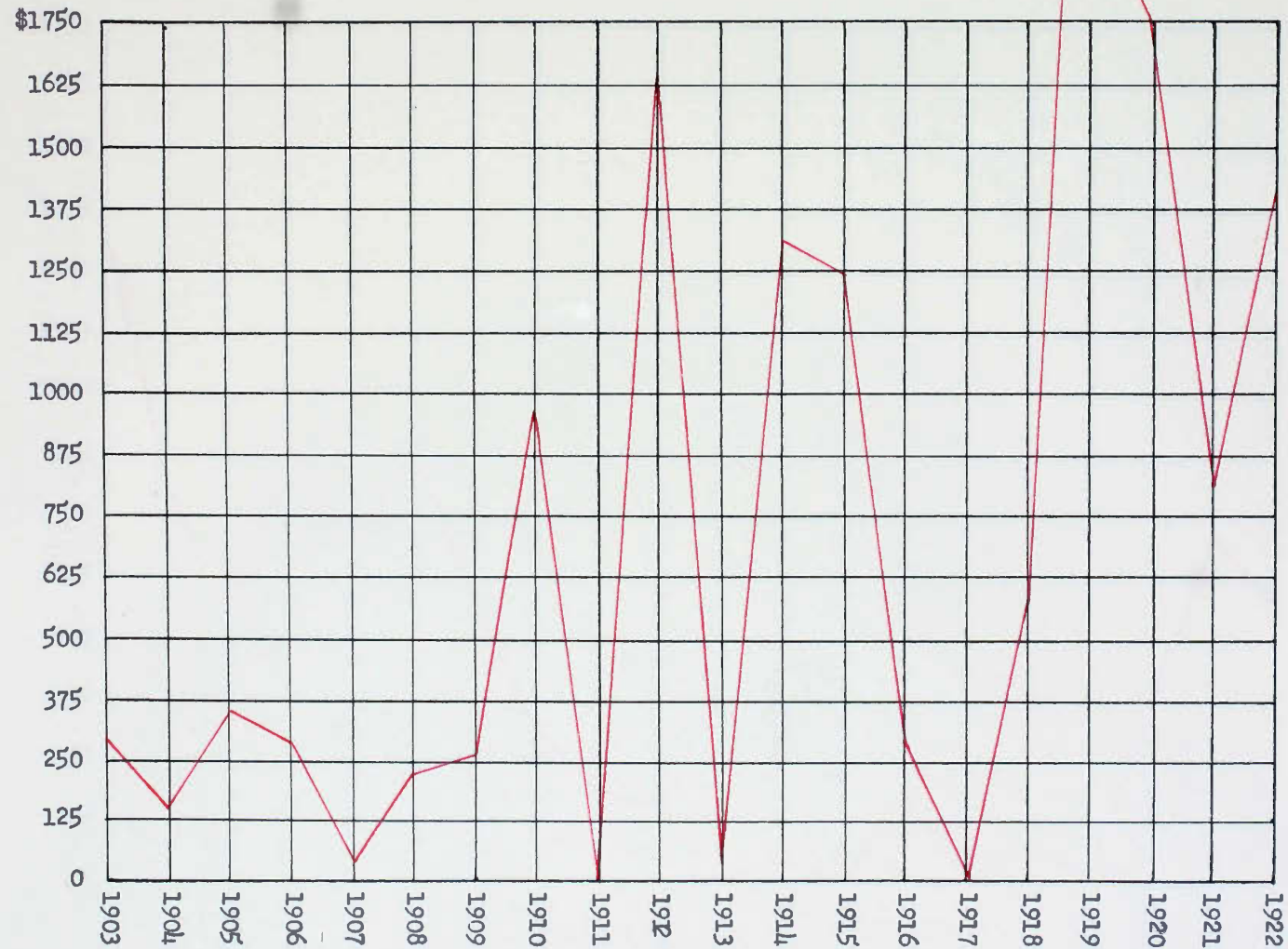


FIGURE V - page 3
Income from Oat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 00)

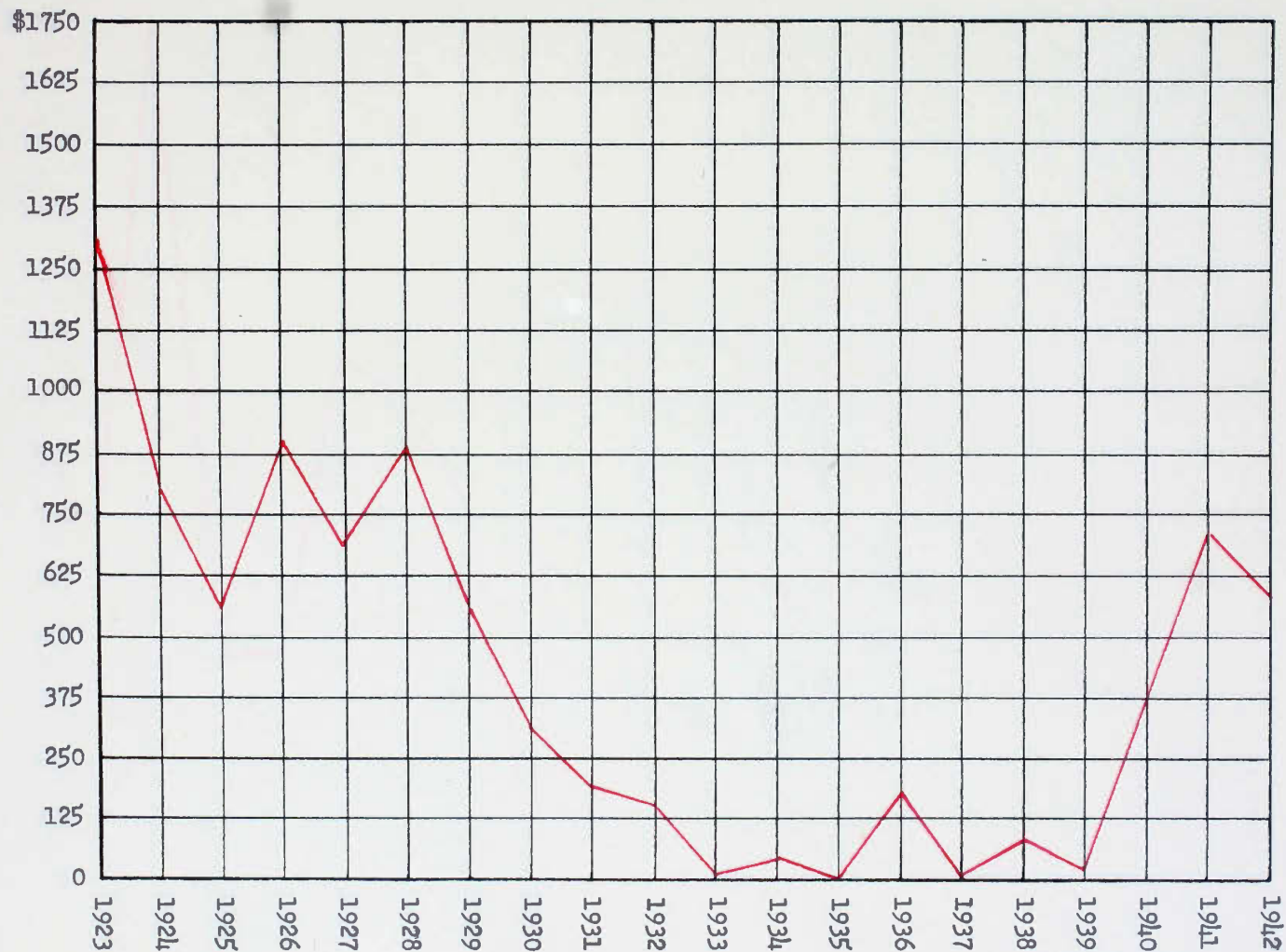
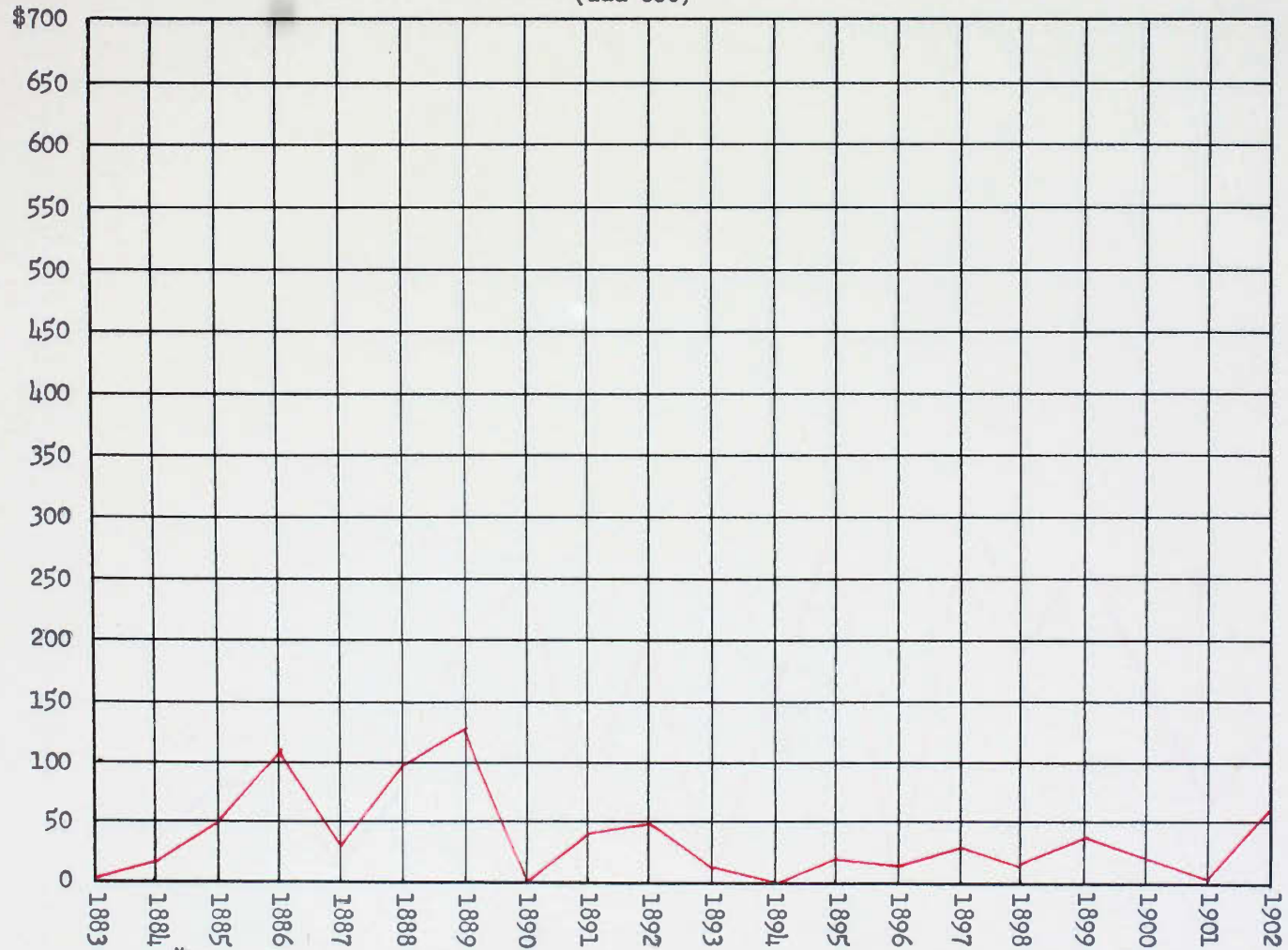


FIGURE V - page 4
Income from Oat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 00)



FIGURE VI*

Income from Corn Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950 (4 pages)
(add 000)



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE VI - page 2
Income from Corn Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

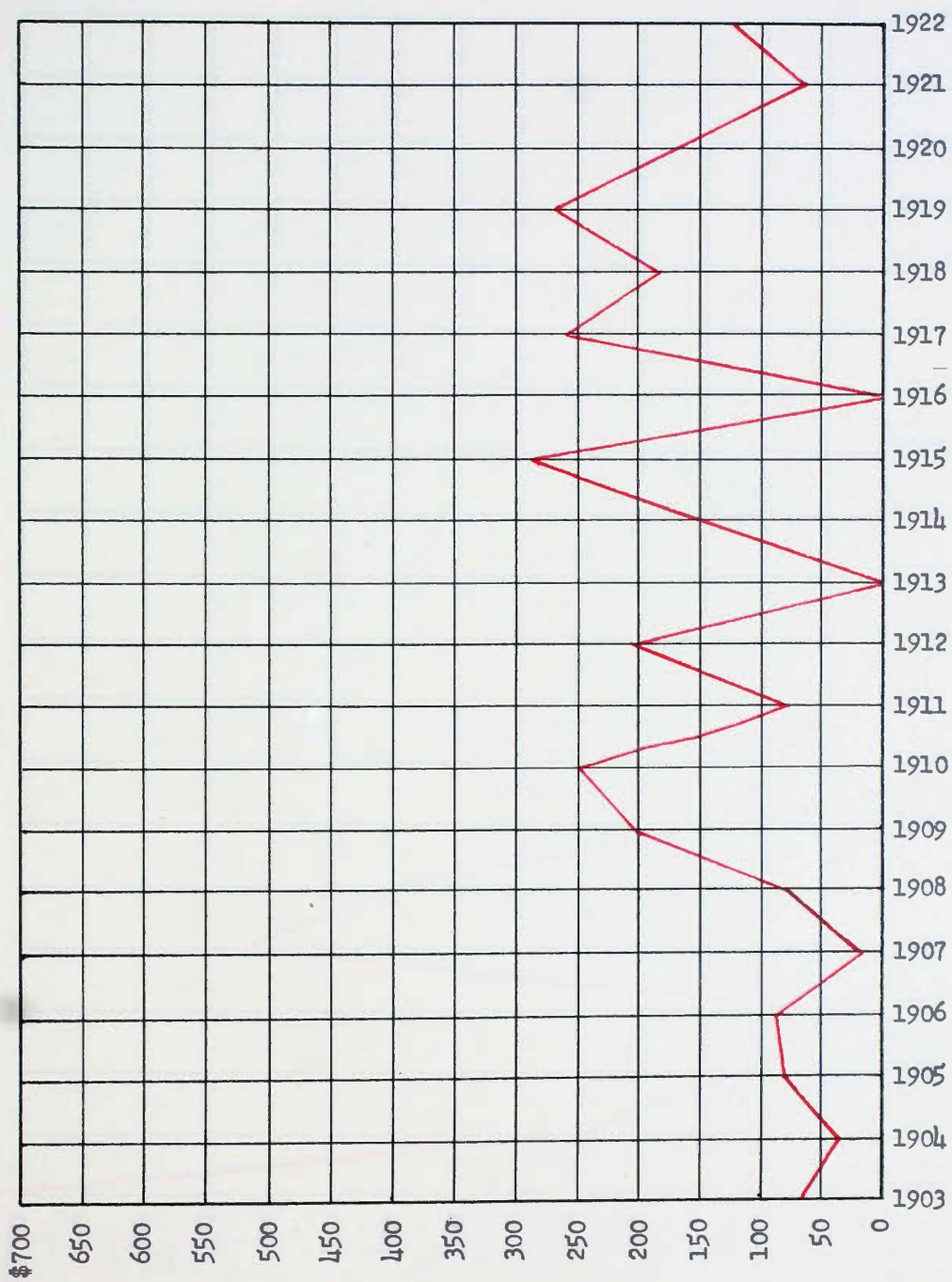


FIGURE VI - page 3
Income from Corn Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950

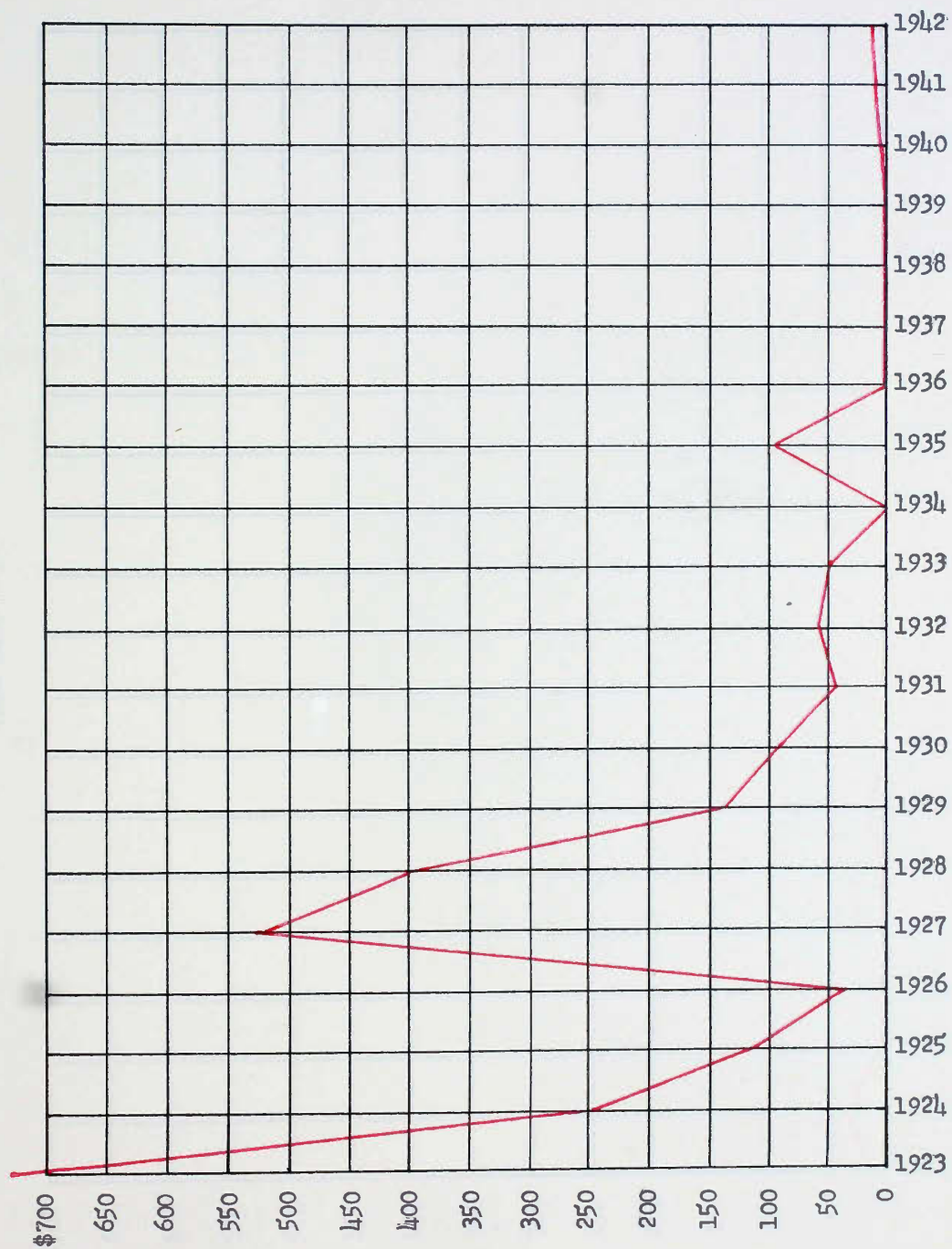


FIGURE VI - page 4
Income from Corn Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

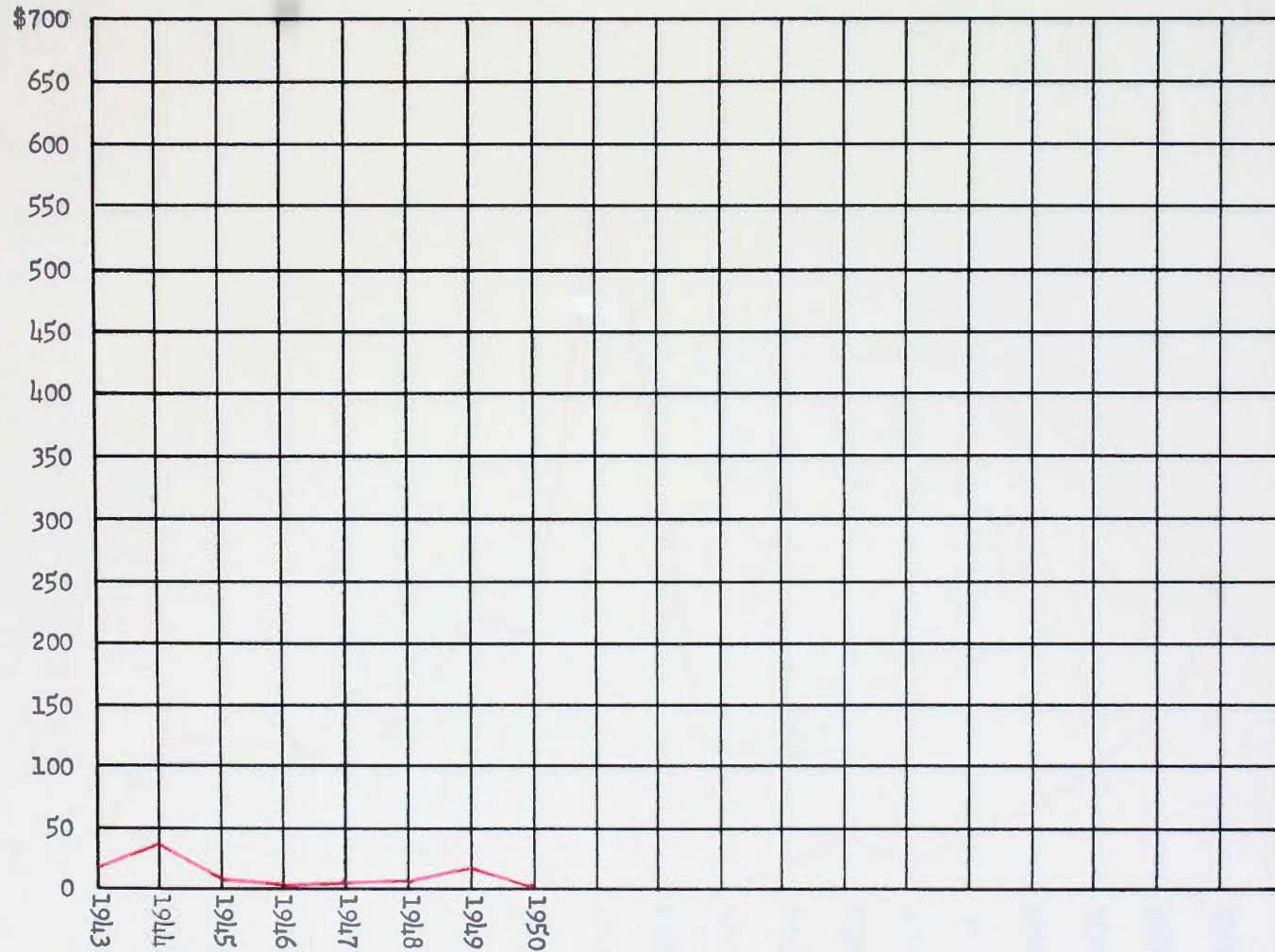
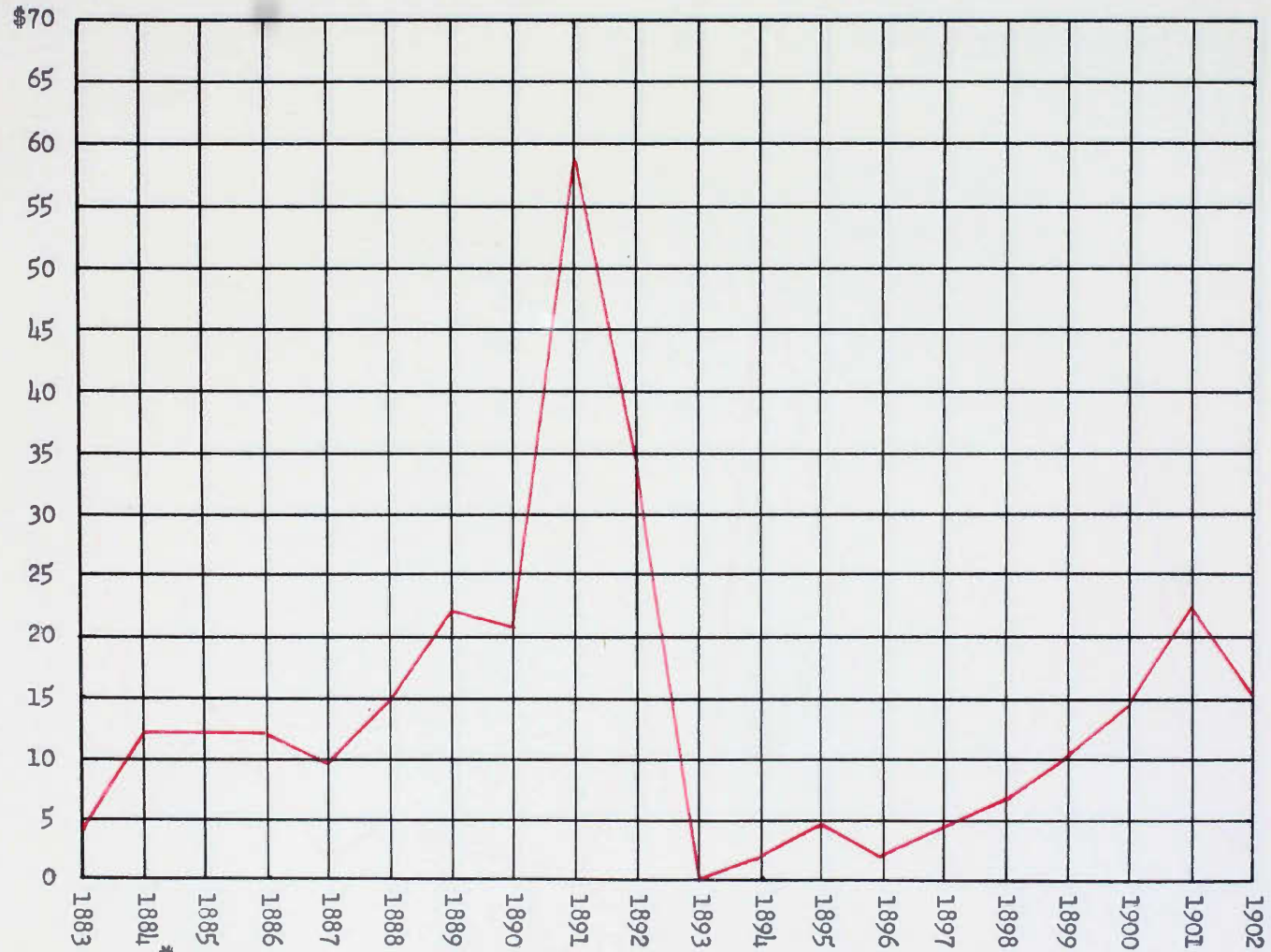


FIGURE VII*
Income from Rye Production, Ness County
Kansas, 1883-1950 (4 pages)
(add 000)



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE VII - page 2
Income from Rye Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

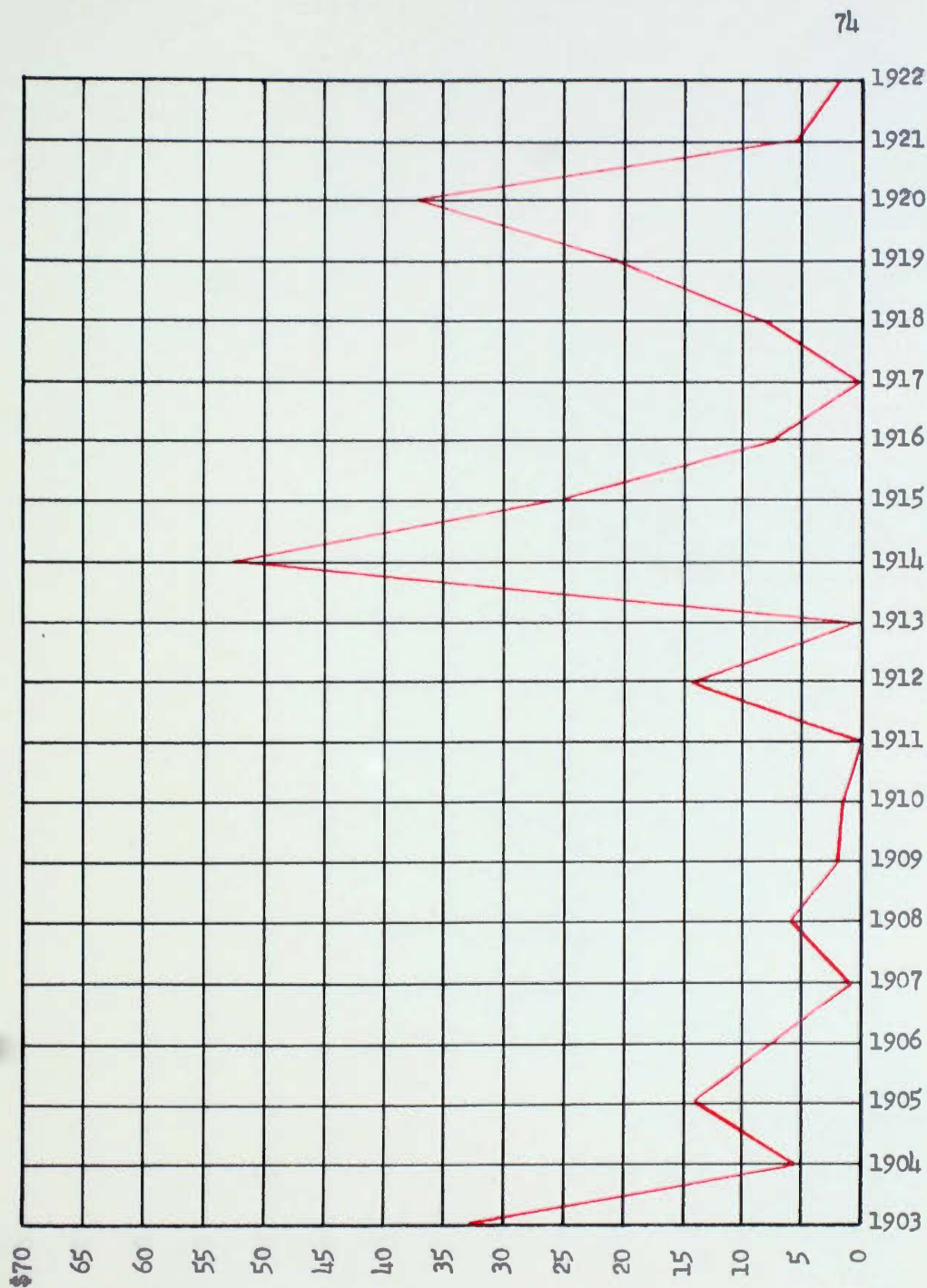


FIGURE VII - page 3
Income from Rye Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

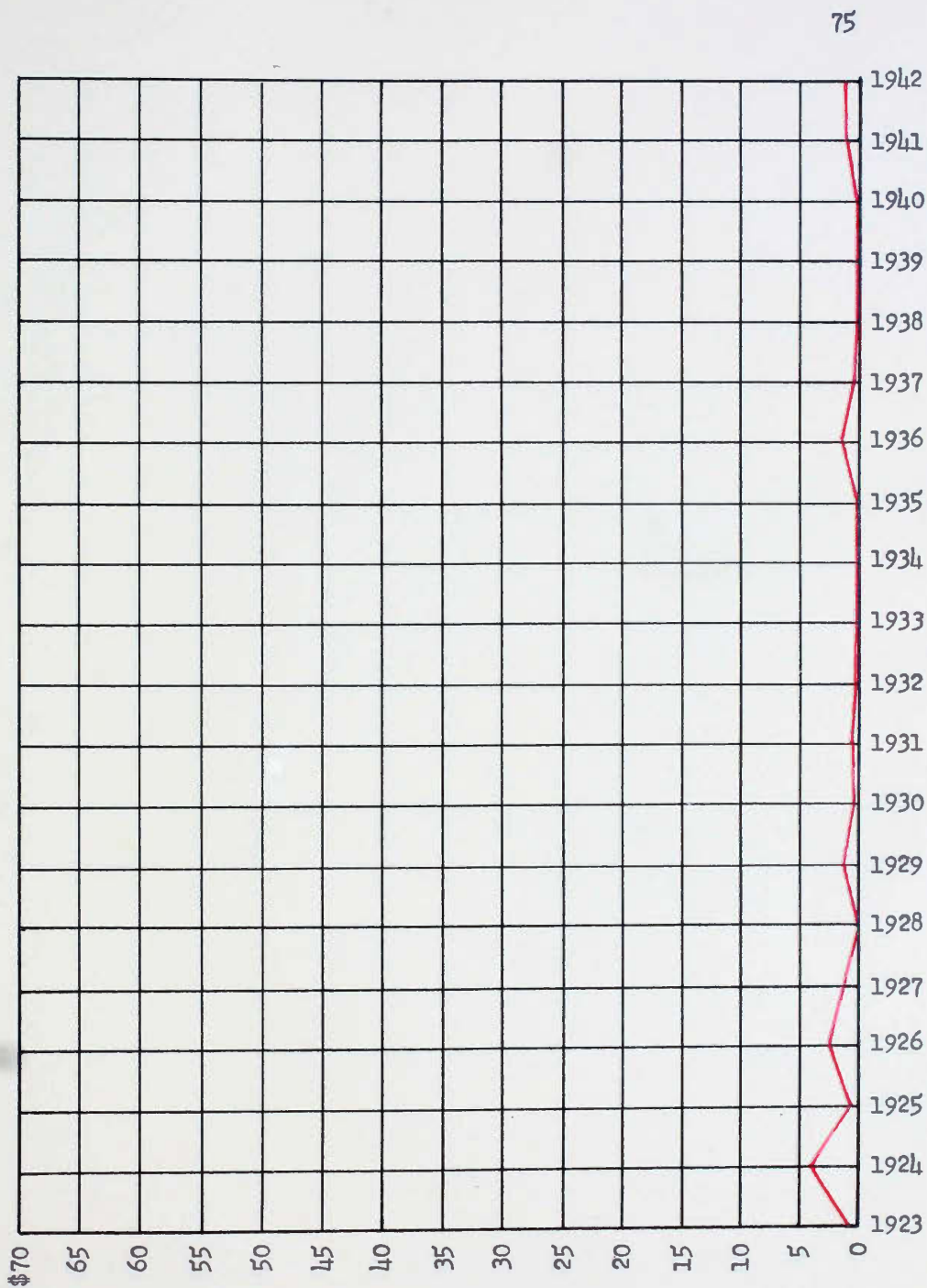


FIGURE VII - page 4
Income from Rye Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 000)

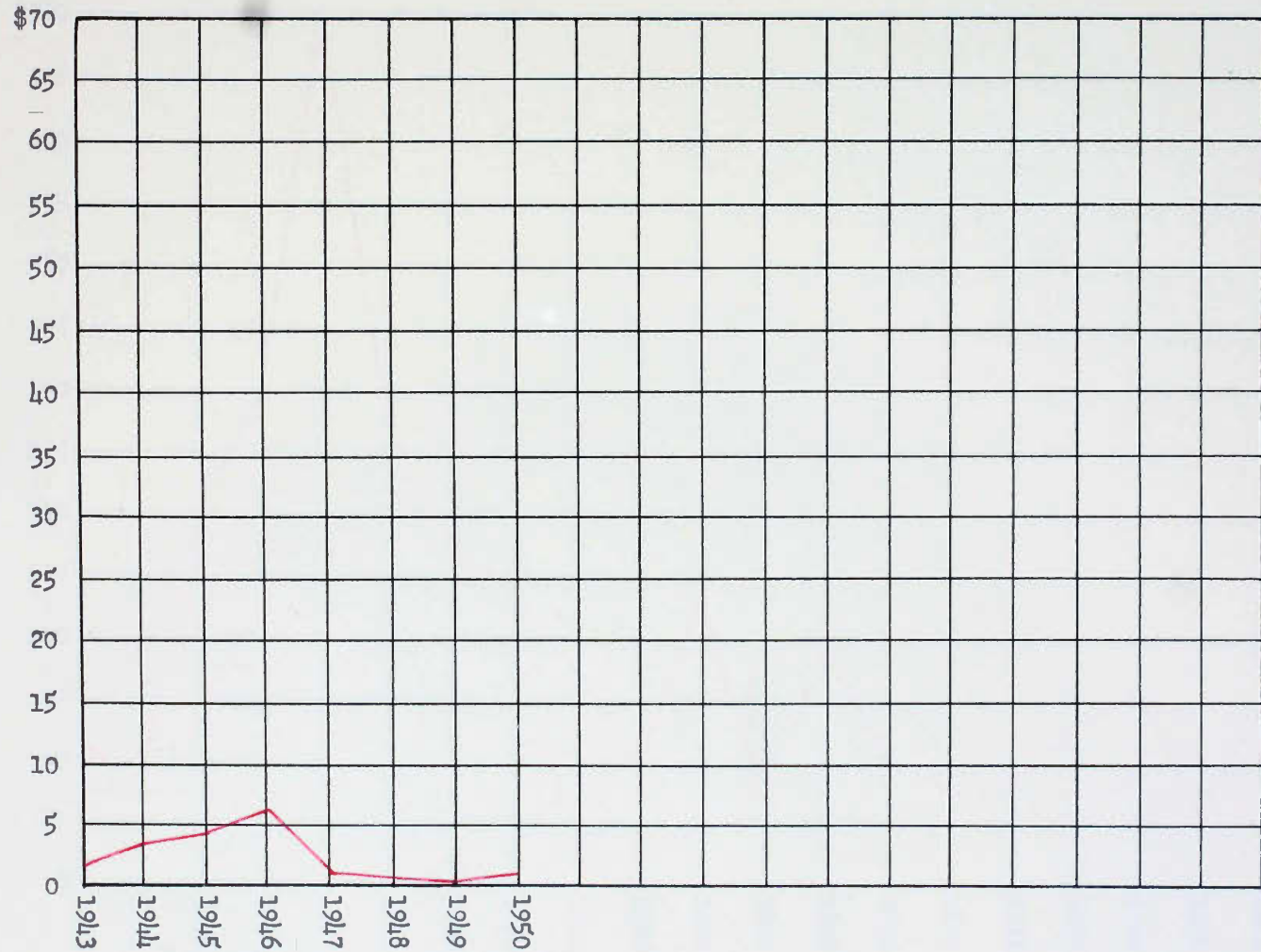
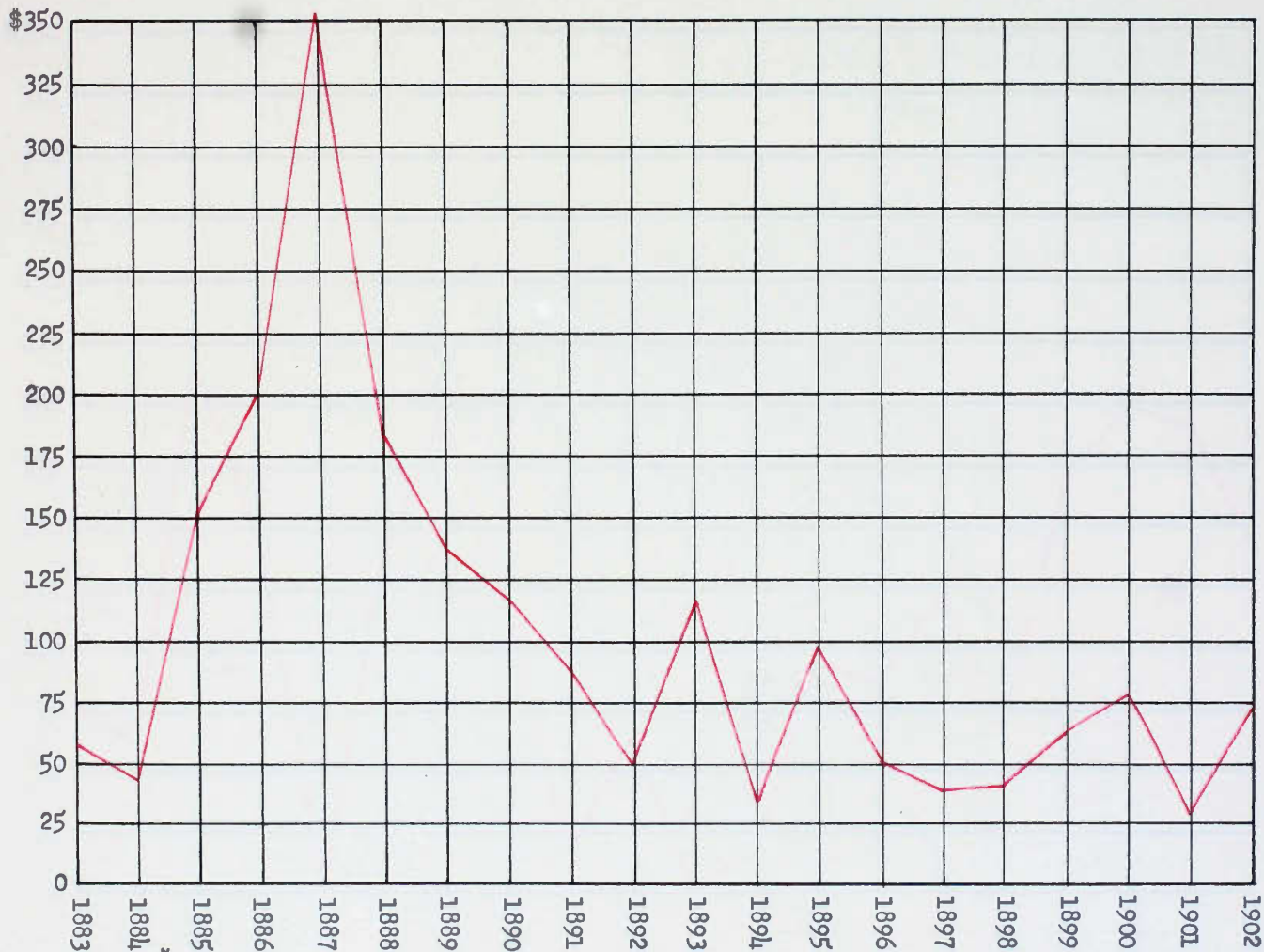


FIGURE VIII*
Income from Potato Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950 (4 pages)
(add 00)



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE VIII - page 2
Income from Potato Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 00)

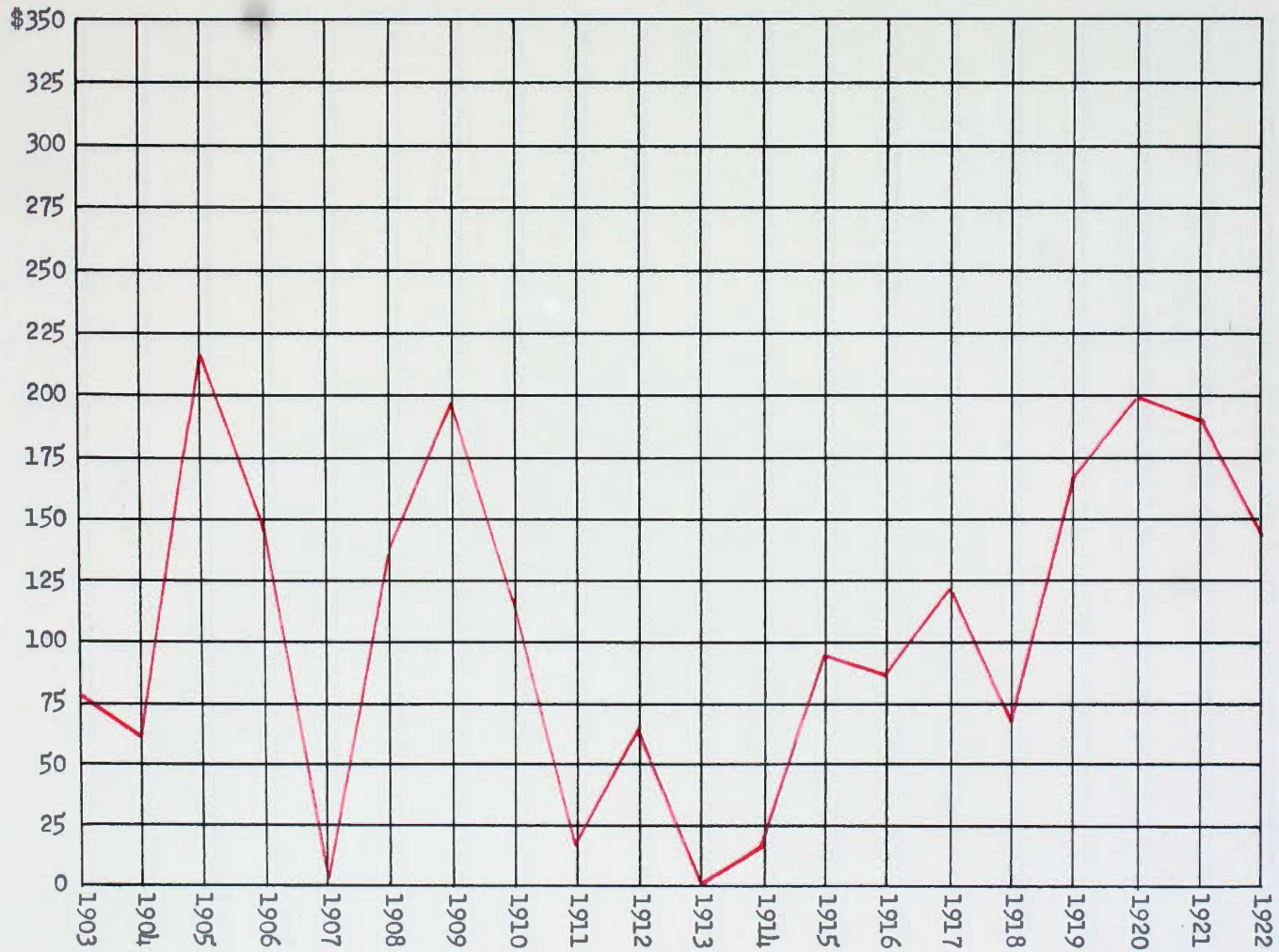


FIGURE VIII - page 3
Income from Potato Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 00)

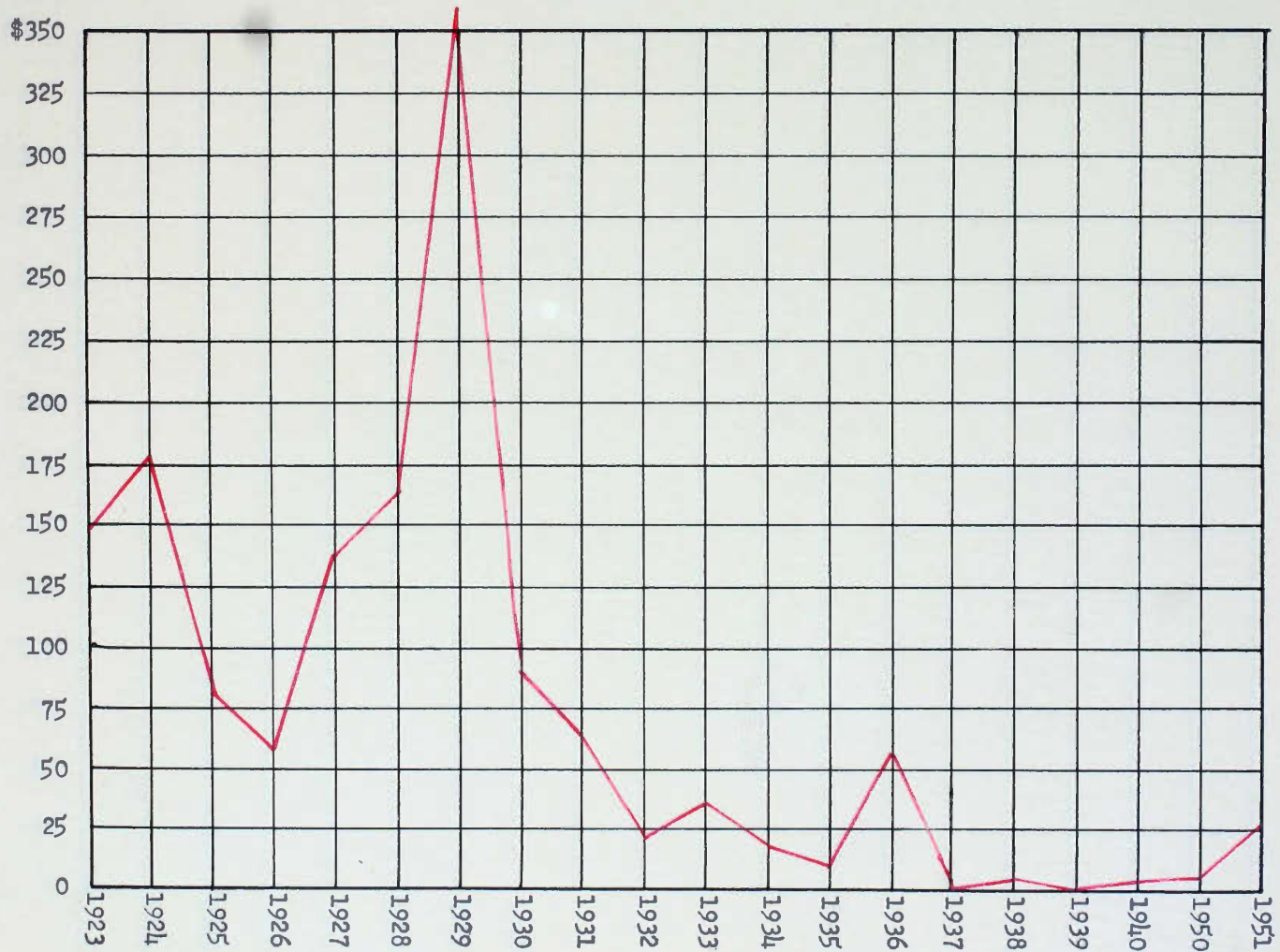


FIGURE VIII - page 4
Income from Potato Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950
(add 00)

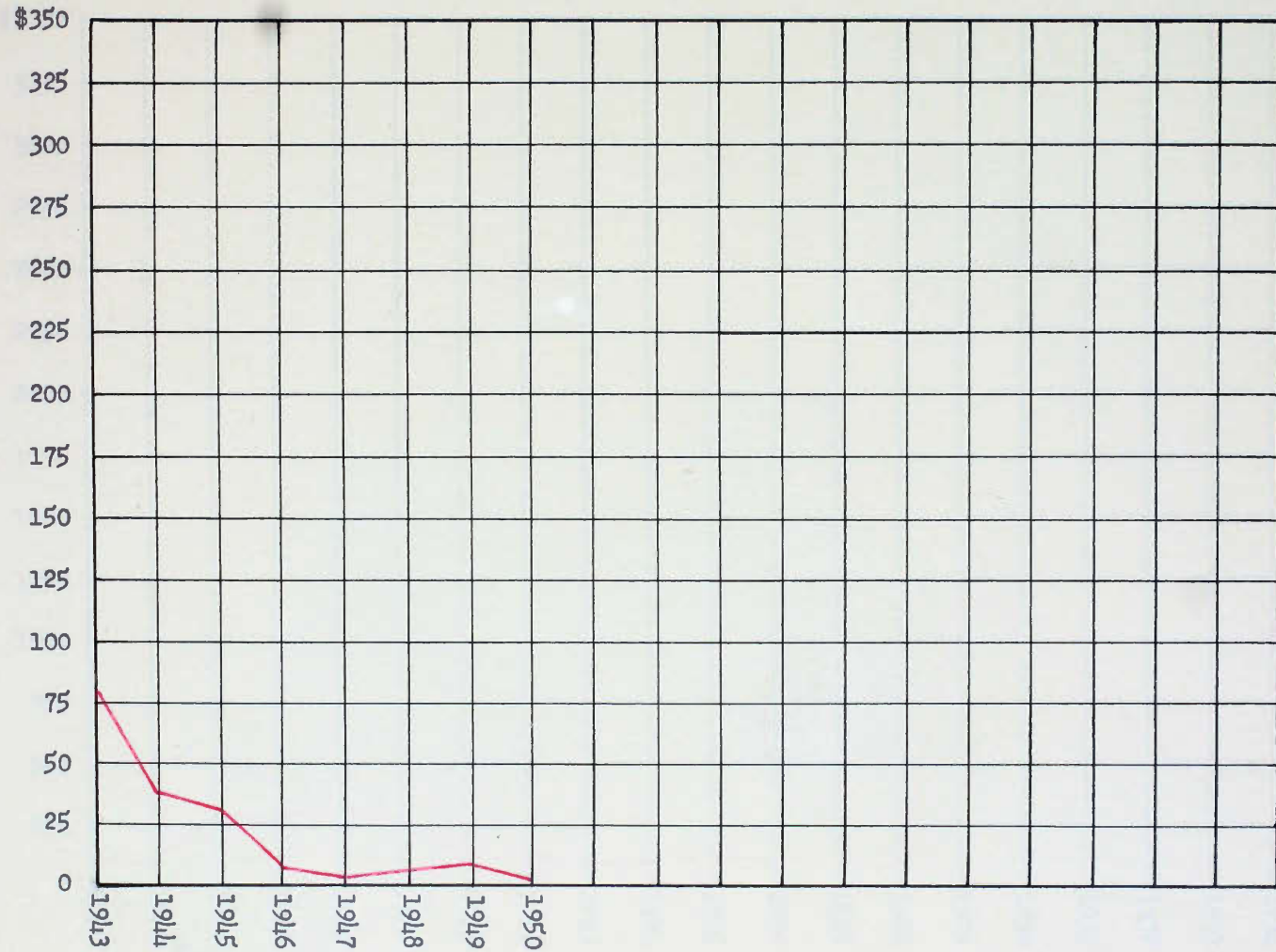
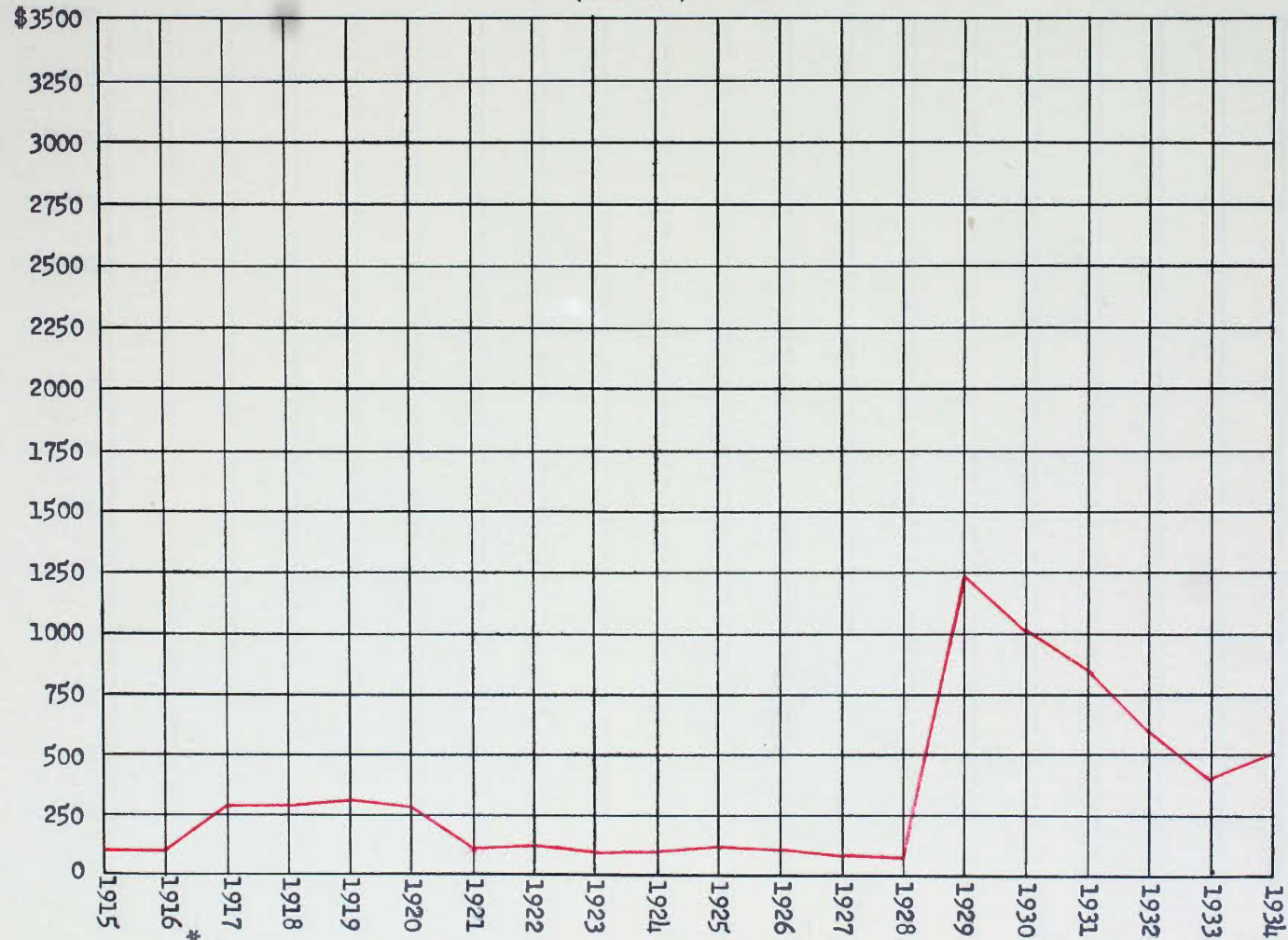


FIGURE IX*

Income from Meat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1915-1950 (2 pages)
(add 000)



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE IX - page 2
Income from Meat Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1915-1950
(add 000)

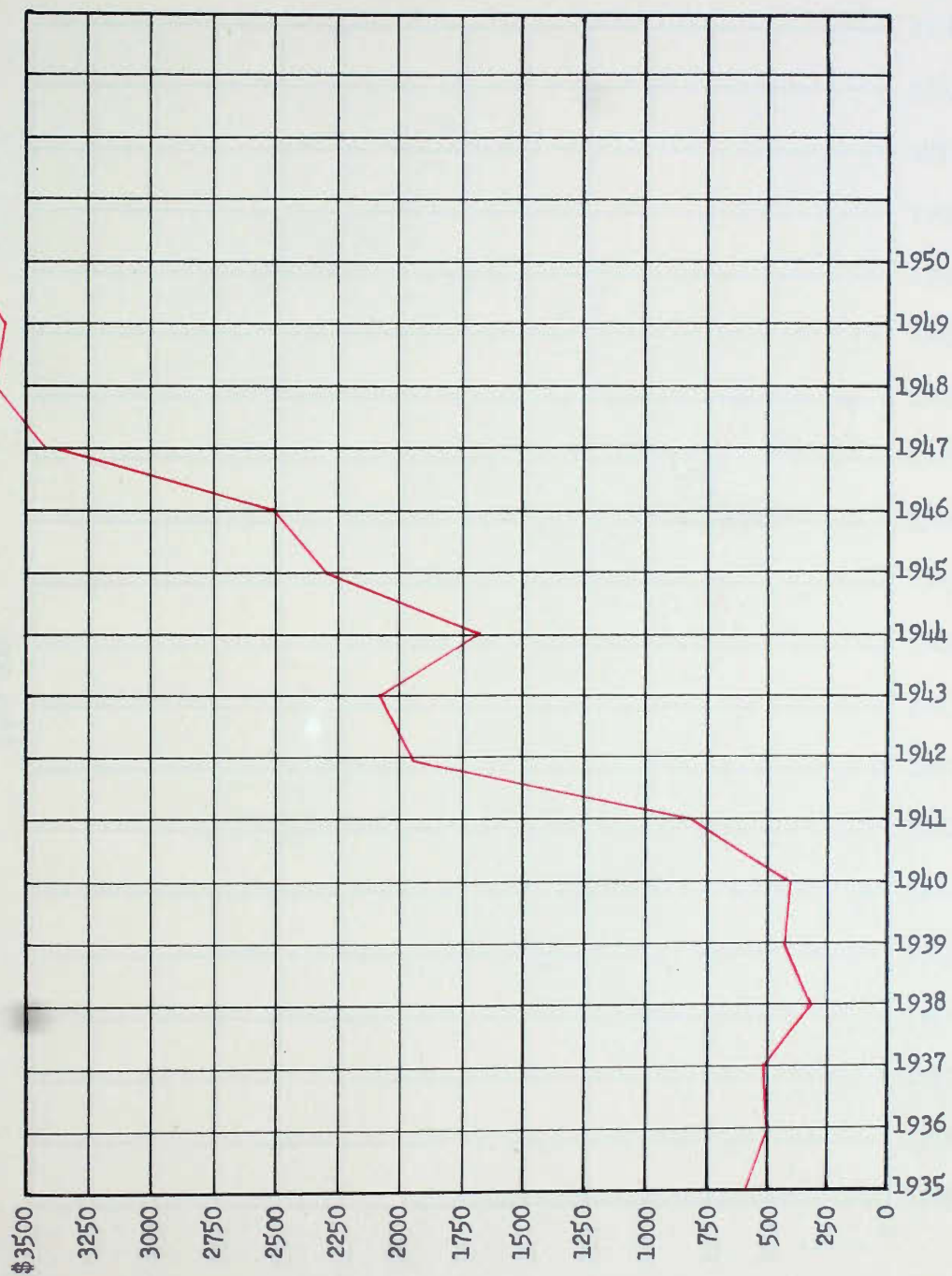
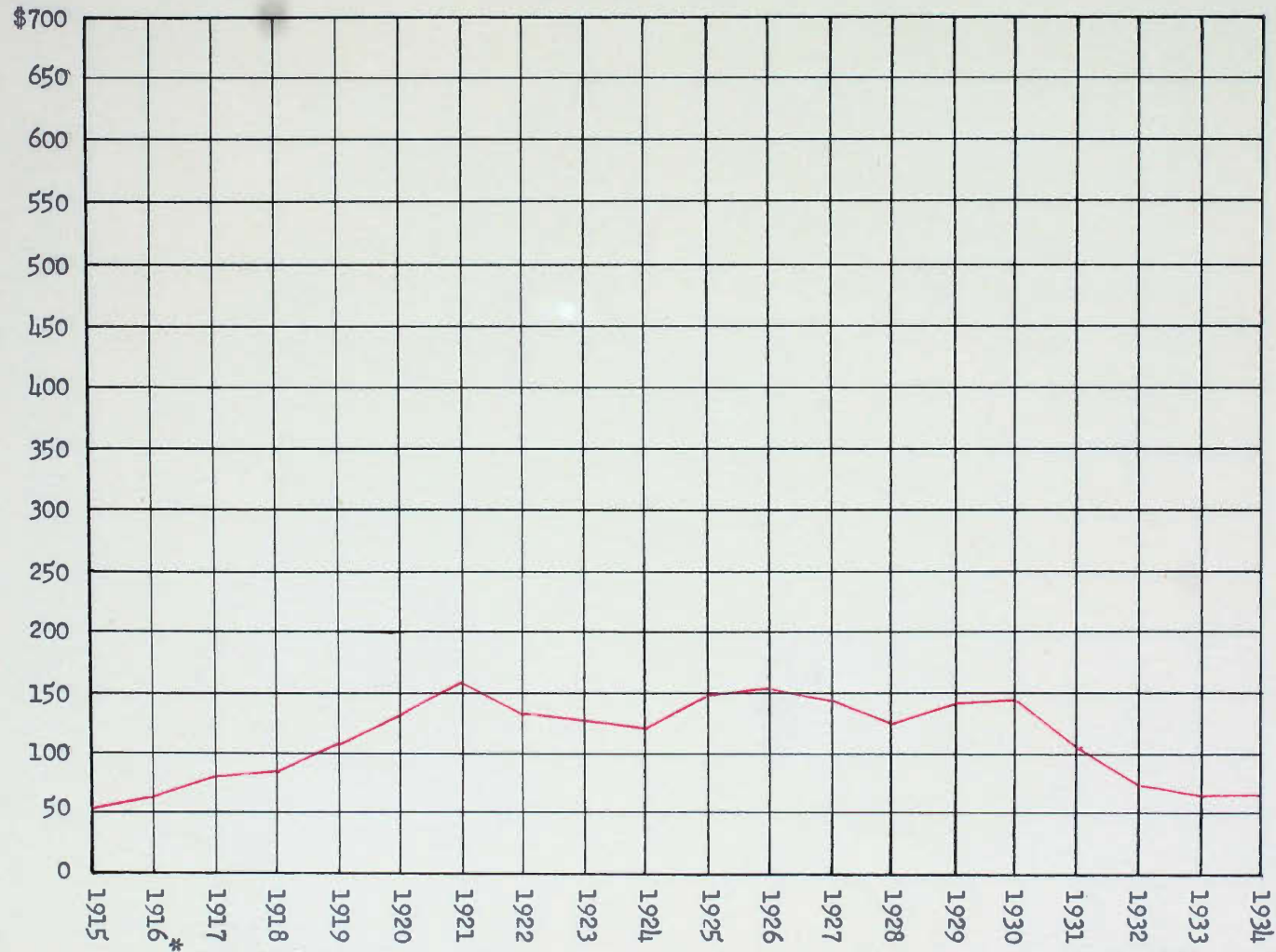


FIGURE X*

Income from Poultry and Eggs, Ness County,
Kansas, 1915-1950 (2 pages)
(add 000)



*Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE X - page 2
Income from Poultry and Eggs, Ness County,
Kansas, 1915-1950
(add 000)

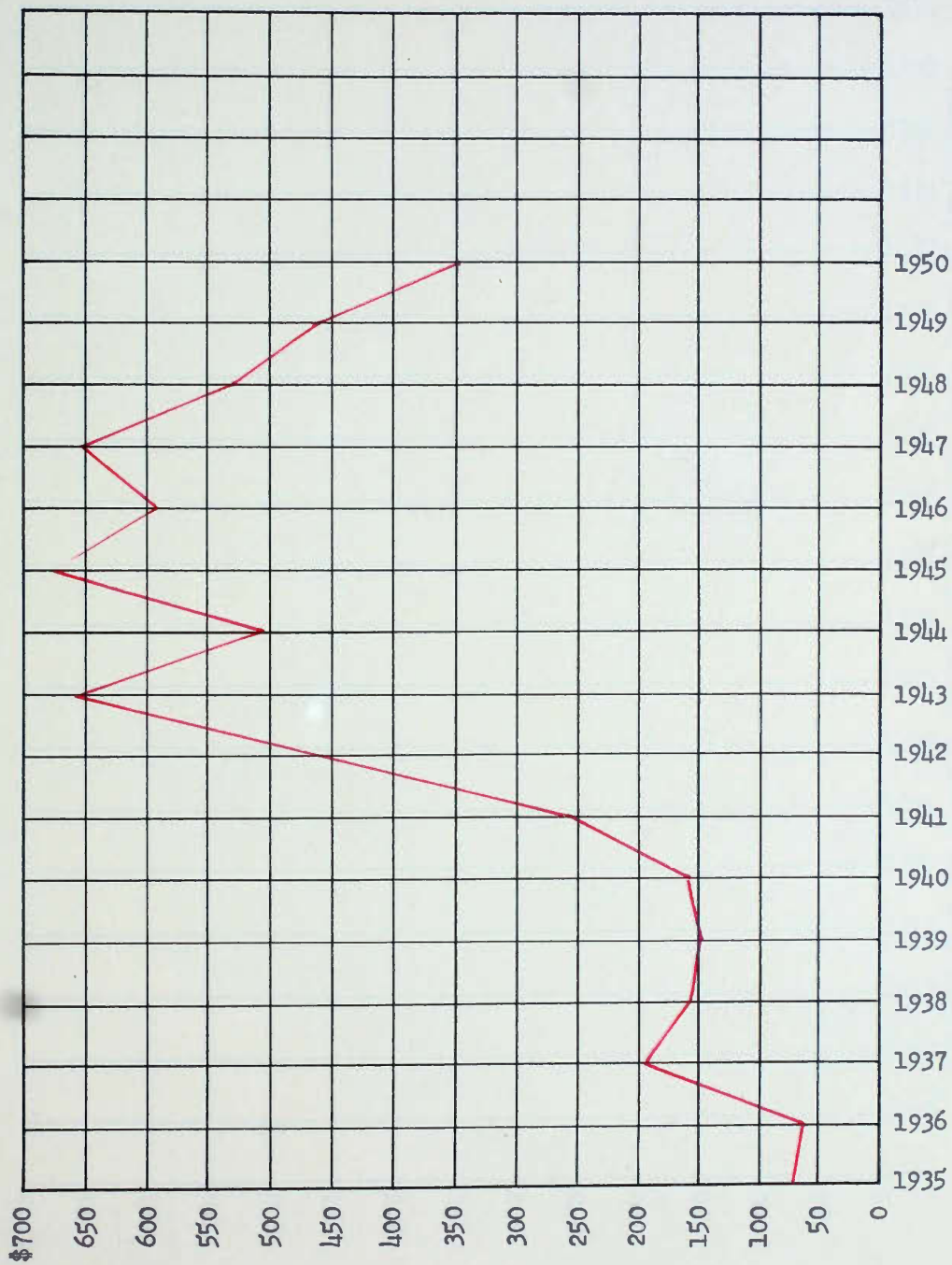


FIGURE XI*
Income from Milk Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1915-1950 (2 pages)
(add 000)

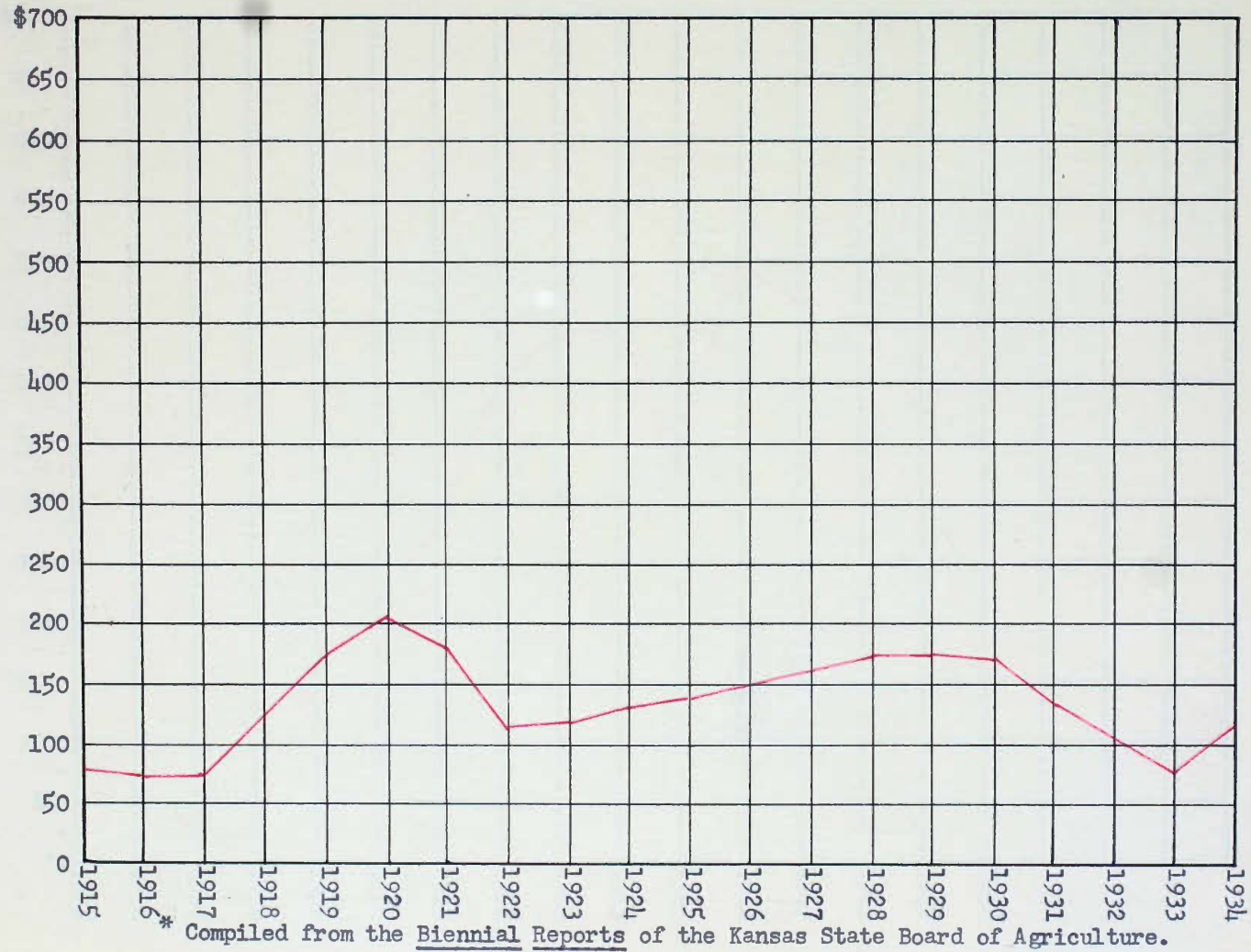


FIGURE XI - page 2
Income from Milk Production, Ness County,
Kansas, 1915-1950
(add 000)

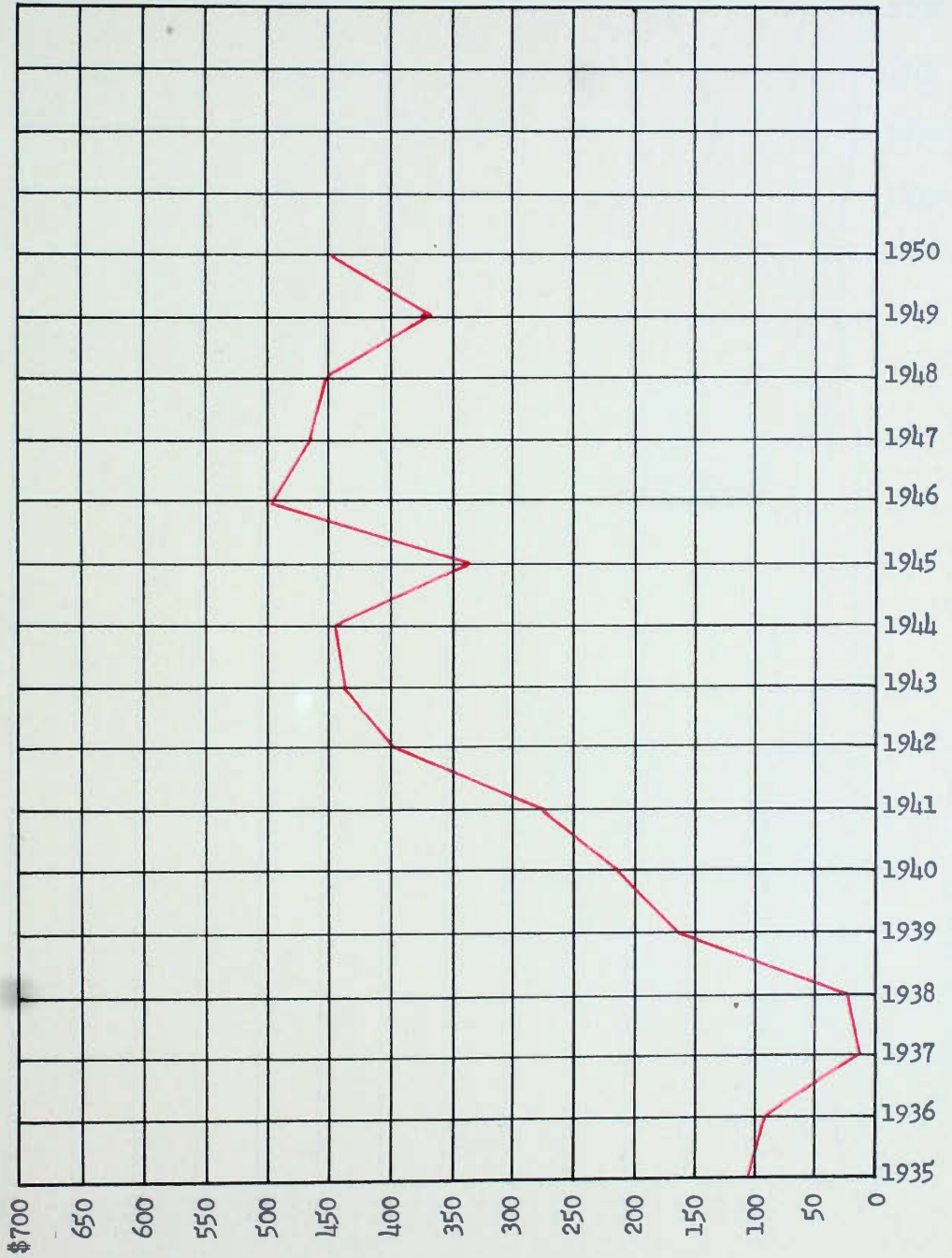
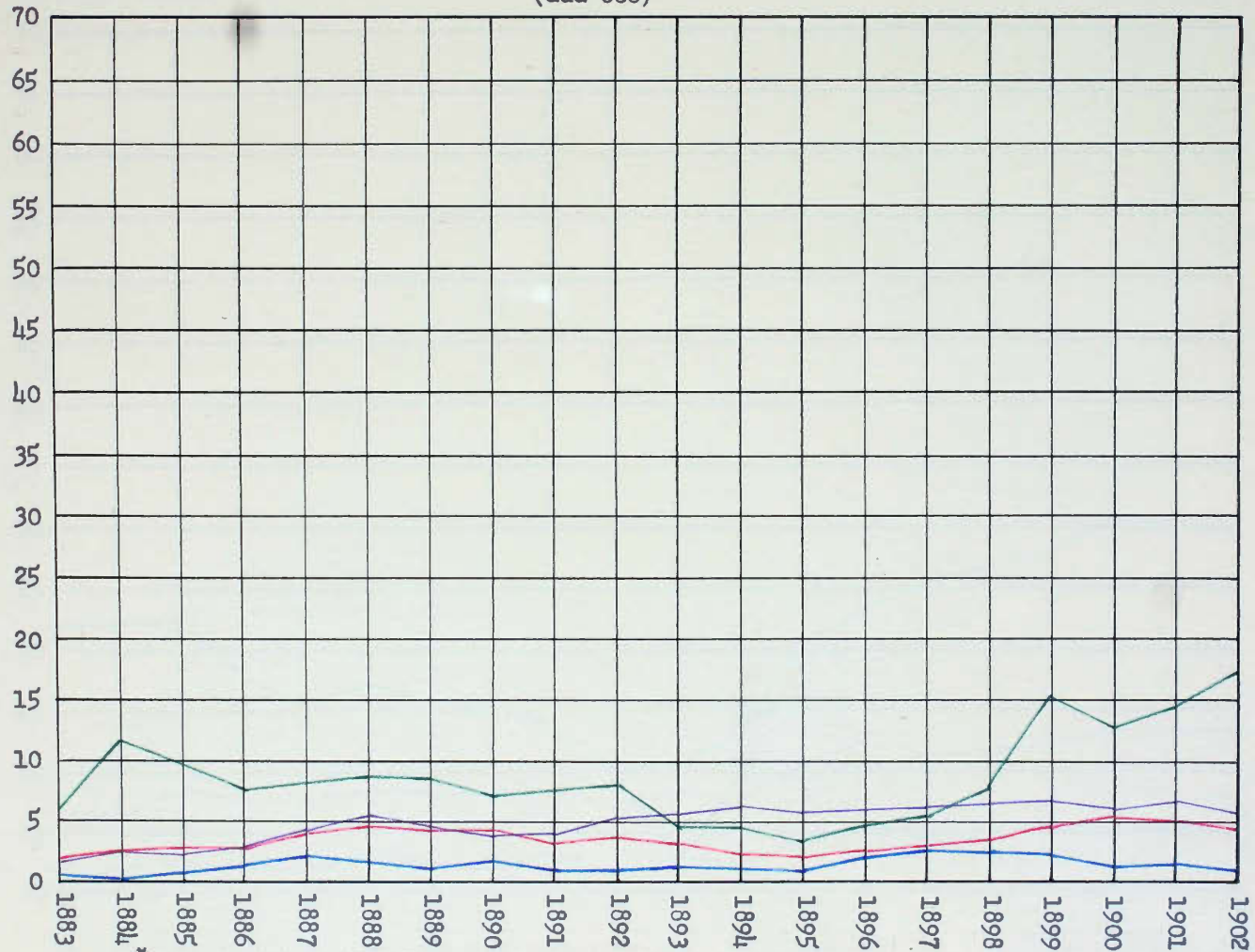


FIGURE XII*

Number of Livestock, Ness County,
Kansas, 1883-1950 (4 pages)
(add 000)

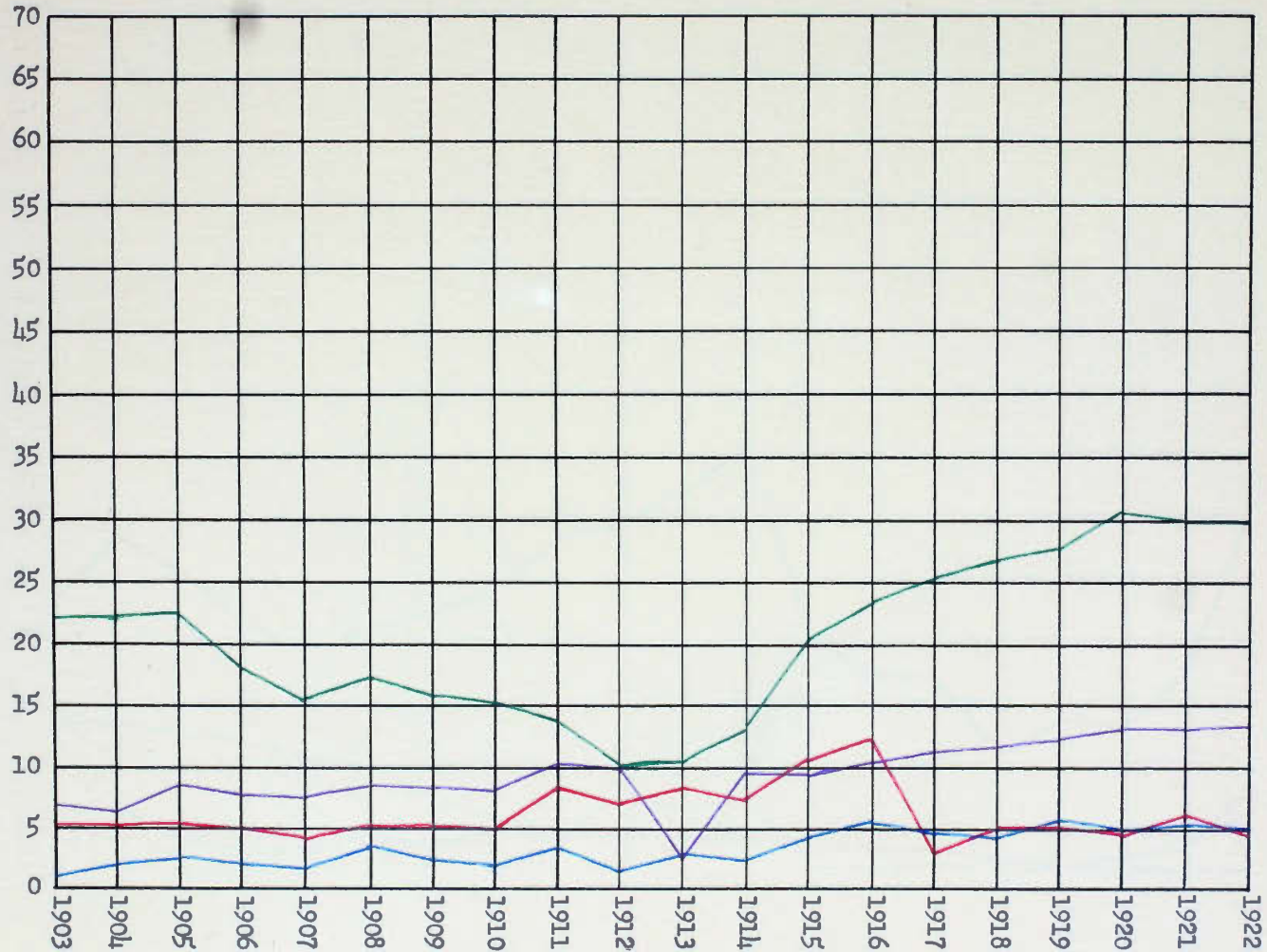
Horses & Mules
Swine
Milk Cows
Other Cattle



* Compiled from the Biennial Reports of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

FIGURE XII - page 2
 Number of Livestock, Ness County,
 Kansas, 1883-1950
 (add 000)

— Horses & Mules
 — Swine
 — Milk Cows
 — Other Cattle



— Horses & Mules
 — Swine
 — Milk Cows
 — Other Cattle

FIGURE XII - page 3
 Number of Livestock, Ness County,
 Kansas, 1883-1950
 (add 000)

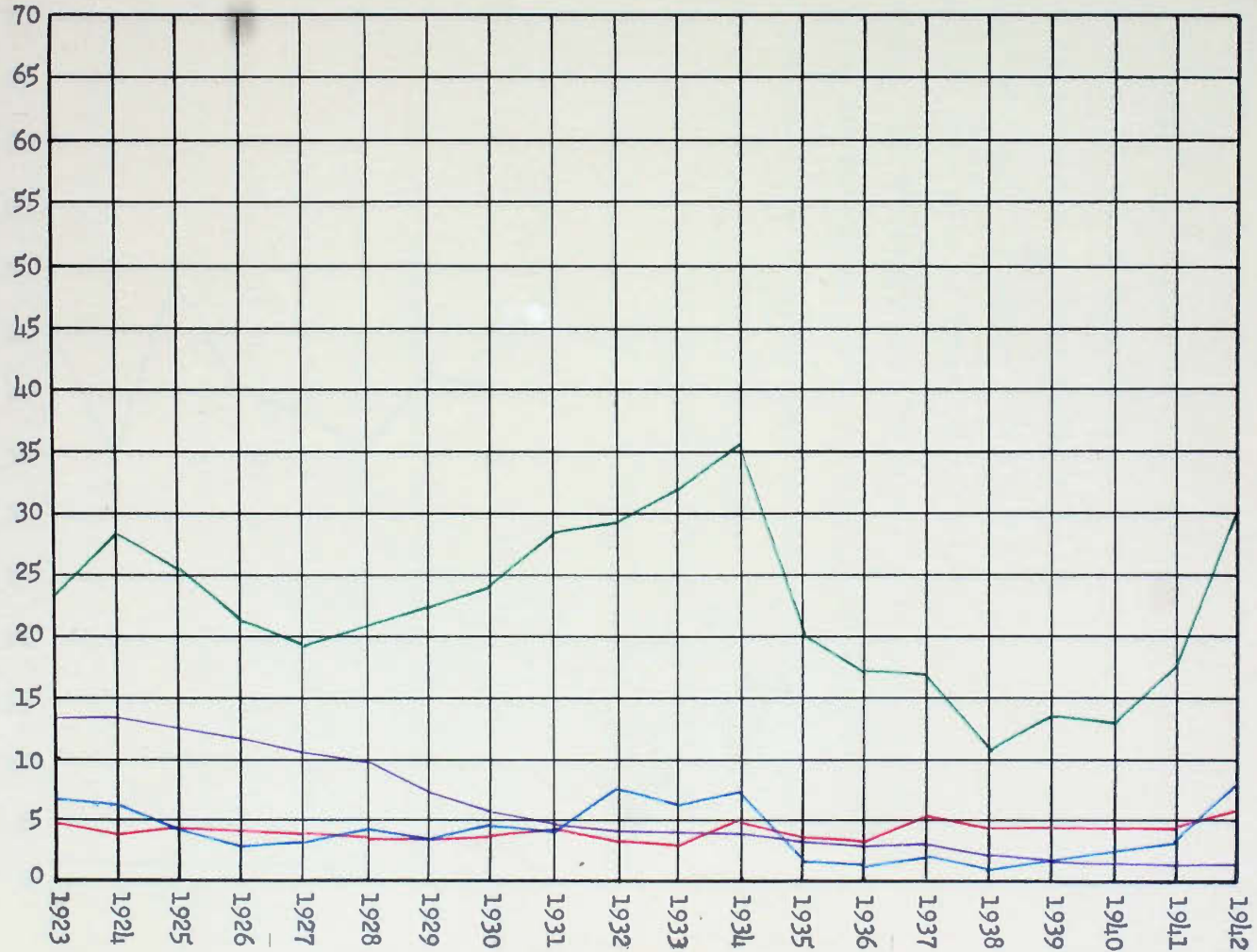
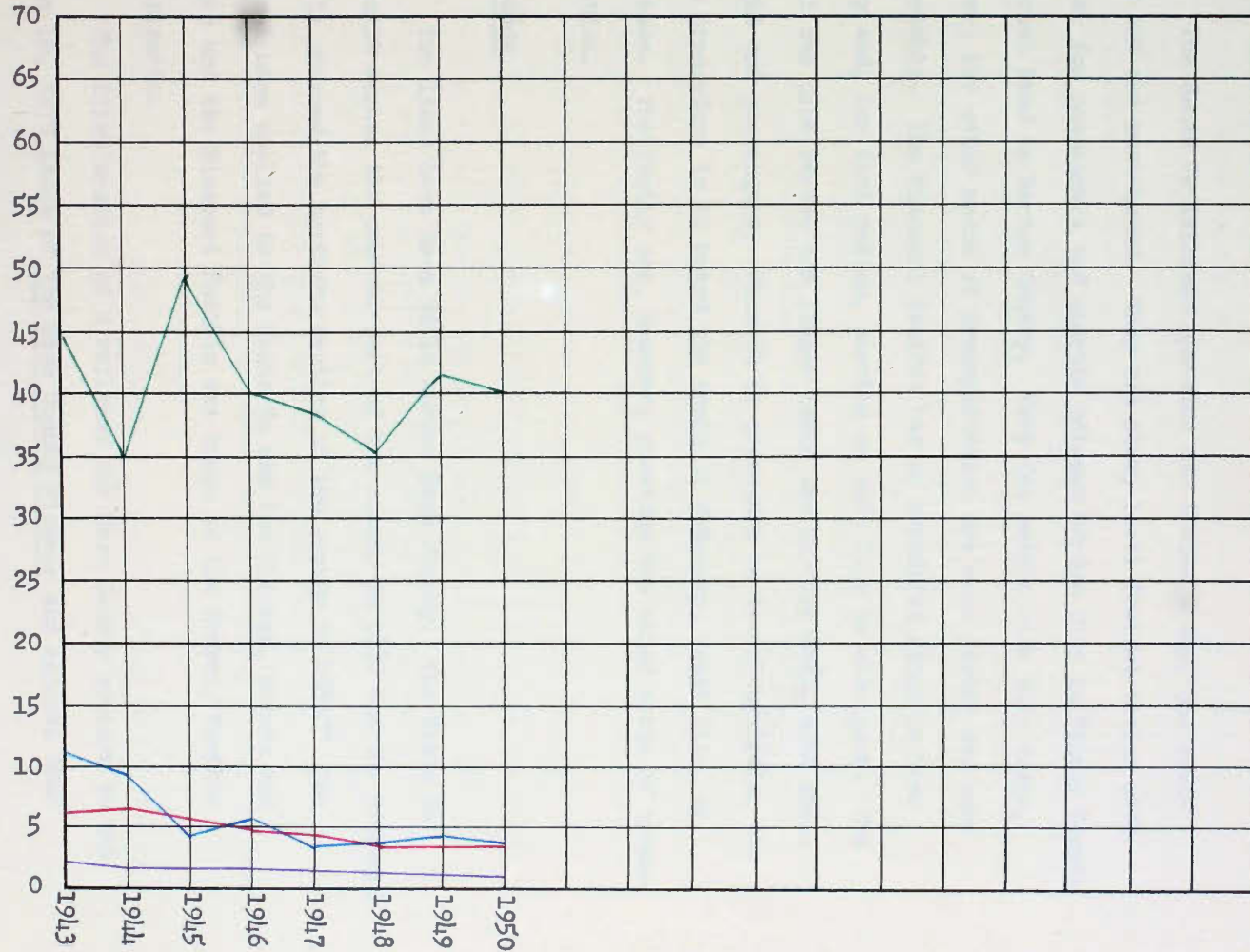


FIGURE XII - page 4
 Number of Livestock, Ness County,
 Kansas, 1883-1950
 (add 000)

— Horses & Mules
 — Swine
 — Milk Cows
 — Other Cattle



Transportation

The Santa Fe Railroad operates two trains a day, one east-bound and one west-bound. They are slow, local freight trains with one car for passengers and operate between Garden City in Finney County and Great Bend in Barton County. Very few people ride this train, however, for other means of transportation are much faster and more comfortable. The Missouri Pacific has no scheduled stops in Ness County and, for that reason, service on this line is also poor. The Bickel Bus Line serves the larger towns and carries mail, some small freight and passengers. When it is necessary to travel by train, the usual procedure is to board the train at Wakeeney, Scott City, or La Crosse. The family car, however, provides the chief means of transportation.

Railroads

Two lines have been built across Ness County. The Santa Fe was built across the central part of the county in 1887 and the Missouri Pacific crossed the northern section of the county in 1889.¹¹ The original name applied to the Santa Fe was the Chicago, Kansas and Western and the Missouri Pacific was known as the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic.

The first mention of a railroad for Ness County appears in the August 16, 1879 issue of The Ness County Pioneer and reports that

¹¹ The Ness County News, August 17, 1929.

"a charter for a narrow gauge railroad, beginning at Onaga [Pottawatomie County] and running through Rush, Ness, Lane and other counties, has been filed in the office of the Secretary of State."¹² No further mention of this road appears.

A great railroad excitement gripped the country from about 1885 to the 1890's. Towns were built where proposed railroads intended to pass and newspapers announced in banner headlines that various railroads were going to be built. During this period, twelve railroads were proposed in addition to the two actually built.

The first concrete step toward securing a railroad for Ness County was taken in the early part of 1885 when a committee from Ness City pledged \$573 to be paid to the Chicago, Nebraska, Kansas and Southwestern Railroad Company to defray the expense of a survey in the Ness City area. The road was to connect with the Texas System in the Panhandle.¹³ If money was collected and paid to the Company, no mention was made of the fact in any of the Ness County newspapers. At any rate, no survey was made by representatives of this railroad.

By 1887, every city of any size seemed assured of at least two railroads and newspapers were pleading with the citizens to provide financial aid. The following example is from The Walnut Valley Sentinel, July 31, 1886.

Ness County has the best kind of prospects to become the great railroad center of Western Kansas. Bonds are voted to our county

¹² The Ness County Pioneer, August 16, 1879.

¹³ The Sixteenth Amendment, April 11, 1885.

line on four different railroads, all of which promise to come to Ness City if they are aided. The four having bonds voted to our county line are the Kansas & Colorado, Walnut Valley & Colorado, Denver, Memphis & Atlantic and the Chicago, Nebraska, Kansas & Southwestern. Besides the above we are offered the Wichita & Colorado and the Kansas, Texas & Southwestern. Bear in mind that these are not paper roads. Four of them are building, two of which at the rate of almost one mile per day. If we fail to get them, it will be our own fault; not the fault of the railroads.¹⁴

The newspapers of Joseph Langellier, The Schoharie Globe, The Truth and The Sixteenth Amendment, failed to echo this sentiment. Mention of railroads was conspicuously absent in these publications and when railroads were mentioned it was often in a derogatory or satirical manner. These papers did not actively crusade against the railroads but when facts were published, they were not presented in the same style as other papers. Such items as the following short statement may be found in Langellier's publications. "For the pleasure of getting two new railroads, Rice County has burdened itself with a \$125,000 bond."¹⁵ The usual journalistic viewpoint is illustrated by the following brief quotation from The Graphic. "Bazine Township stood by the Santa Fe bond proposition right nobly giving a majority of 31 in favor of the bonds."¹⁶

Joseph Langellier may possibly have had some previous unhappy experience with the railroads or perhaps he was simply more far sighted than the majority. Whatever the reason for his position, the citizens paid little attention. Meetings were held at Nonchalanta in the southeast

¹⁴ The Walnut Valley Sentinel, July 31, 1886.

¹⁵ The Schoharie Globe, February 29, 1884.

¹⁶ The Graphic, August 14, 1886.

section of the county to discuss finance with representatives of the Midland & Frisco Railroad which was to run from Larned through the southern portion of the county. The cities of Riverside, Harold and Nonchalanta were represented.¹⁷

The Denver, Memphis and Atlantic was slated to build two lines diagonally across the county. A trunk line was to run from Larned to Utica¹⁸ and another line was to be built from McCracken to Garden City.¹⁹

On August 18, 1887, The Nonchalanta Herald reported that the charter of the Omaha, Ness City and Mexico Railroad Company had been filed with the Secretary of State. The company proposed the building of a road to run diagonally through the state via Ness City and Nonchalanta and on to Mexico City.²⁰

The Omaha, Dodge City and Southern Railroad Company proposed the building of a road which would pass through Bazine and Riverside. The route for the road was surveyed through Ness County in 1888²¹ and by 1889, according to newspaper reports, work had begun on the eastern end.²²

¹⁷ The Nonchalanta Herald, July 21, 1887.

¹⁸ The Bazine Leader, March 22, 1889.

¹⁹ The Harold Boomer, April 14, 1887.

²⁰ The Nonchalanta Herald, August 18, 1887.

²¹ The Bazine Banner, June 29, 1888.

²² The Bazine Leader, March 22, 1889.

The depression of 1890 brought the railroad boom to an end. Had it not been for this depression, some of these roads certainly would have been built and possibly changed the future of Ness County. It is quite probable, however, that many of these roads were only "paper roads" and would not have been built anyway. At any rate, the depression served as a handy excuse for the Railroad Companies failure to build.

The last proposed railroad through Ness County was a road to be built from Garden City to Superior, Nebraska under the name of the Nebraska, Kansas & Southern. The line was to pass through Ness City, about two and a quarter miles east of Ransom, through Stockton in Rooks County and on to Superior, Nebraska. The town of Osgood was platted and lots were sold at the point where the Missouri Pacific and this road were to cross. No stores or houses were built but a grain elevator located at that point is known today as the Osgood elevator.

By 1906, the survey of the route was complete and work had begun. Five miles of track had been put down outside of Garden City when the Panic of 1907 brought work to a halt. Work was not resumed after the Panic and Mr. Charles Shellenberger of Ransom, former vice president of the line, stated that he did not know what happened to the track that had been laid but that he had several shares of stock in the company that he would dispose of at a marked discount.

Roads

The first settlers in Ness County followed the line of least resistance to their destination. As more and more settlers moved into

the county, trails were formed and, after settlement was fairly well along, roads were laid out.

Early travel and communication was a major project. The Ness County Pioneer reported on December 13, 1879 that "it takes from Friday evening until Wednesday morning to get mail from Clarinda to Sidney, a distance of $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles."²³ With such transportation facilities as the early pioneer possessed, it is easy to see why four towns were built within a radius of two miles.

Today, there are 100.746 miles of improved highways in Ness County²⁴ and many more miles of good gravel farm roads. The county is crossed by three major highways--two state and one federal. U. S.-283 bisects the county from north to south, passing through Ness City and two miles east of Ransom. K-96 follows the Santa Fe Railroad across the county, passing through Bazine and Ness City and running about a half mile north of the community of Beeler. Highway K-4 crosses the northern section of the county and serves the towns of Brownell, Ransom, Arnold and Utica.

Airports

The Civil Aeronautics Commission recognizes only the one airport at Ness City. Bazine lays claim to an airport but it is little

²³ The Ness County Pioneer, December 13, 1879.

²⁴ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirty-seventh Biennial Report (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1950), p.

more than a pasture which has been set aside for the use of private planes and, if we consider pastures as airports, Ness County may lay claim to many fine fields.

Mineral Resources

Some of the early pioneers hoped to find fame and fortune beneath the soil of Ness County. Accordingly, prospecting companies were formed to search for mineral deposits. As early as August 16, 1879, mention was made in The Ness County Pioneer of the formation of a large coal prospecting company in Ness County under the leadership of "Mr. Bass." Fifteen men were employed and it was reported that the company had strong financial backing.²⁵

The first and greatest mining venture was started in 1879 and threw the town of Bazine into a state of intense excitement. A settler named John Condid started it all by announcing that he had located a vein of silver just south of Bazine. A company was formed and men were hired to dig with pick axe and spade for one dollar a day. The shaft went deeper and deeper while the pile of dirt and rock grew. Reports, however, were encouraging. The following letter to the editor of The Ness County Pioneer appeared in the October 20, 1879 issue of that paper.

In your issue of November 10th in speaking of an assay of silver taken from the "Emma Mine" on the claim of John Condid, near Bazine, it reads \$20.00 per ton, which should read \$120.00

²⁵ The Ness County Pioneer, August 16, 1879.

silver and \$10.00 copper per ton. We are also assorting ore, and building a house for the same.

We remain, Respectfully yours, Forbes Rindge and Co.²⁶

No further mention of this company appears. The shaft, which had reached a depth of seventy feet, was abandoned and finally covered over because of the menace to livestock.

Most of the early mining companies were seeking coal, for fuel was becoming very scarce. In the early part of 1880 there was talk of prospecting for coal at Ness City²⁷ and in 1888, The Bazine Banner reported that a company was prospecting at Nonchalanta for "either coal, salt or gas, whichever they happen to reach first."²⁸

In 1889, the town of Bazine was astonished to learn that the city might become a coal mining center. The following article appeared in the March 15, 1889 issue of The Bazine Leader.

Two weeks ago the News briefly referred to the fact that coal was known to exist at a point about five miles southeast of this city, and that we had tested its burning qualities. Last Wednesday Mr. Thaddeus Cutler, of this city, brought to this office a sack of coal which he had picked up in the trench that had been worked some nine or ten years ago by Charley Case, who originally discovered the existence of coal in that vicinity. Case was not possessed of sufficient means to follow up his discovery, and after a time abandoned the work, but not until he had followed up the vein which at last showed a thickness of between six and eight inches. At that point it was impossible to proceed further with the tools and resources at his command, and he abandoned further prospecting after the black diamonds. Afterwards the land on which the find was made--the southwest quarter of section 22, township 19, range 23--came into the possession of Mr. Cutler, and for more than a year past he has been quietly prospecting, and now he is sanguine that he will ultimately succeed in developing a paying coal mine.

²⁶ The Ness County Pioneer, October 20, 1879.

²⁷ The Ness County Pioneer, April 10, 1880.

²⁸ The Bazine Banner, July 27, 1888.

A gentleman of this city who can enlist the capital for making investigations upon a larger scale than has been heretofore pursued has had his attention called to the matter, and he promised that, if upon examination the prospects are as good as represented, he will enlist the aid of capitalists in sinking the necessary shafts and opening the mine.²⁹

Whether any further attempt was made to develop this mine is not known. At any rate, no further mention of the mine was made by the paper.

Limestone

Limestone is found throughout the county and is of a quality suitable for building purposes although it is rarely used today for that purpose. Many of the old buildings of Ness County are built of native limestone. The largest limestone quarry in the county was located near Bazine and was first operated by John E. Farnsworth.

Oil

It is only fitting that Bazine, with its mining history, should, in 1928, become the site selected for the first oil well to be drilled in Ness County. The well was drilled several miles east of the town and, after a great deal of difficulty, was finally abandoned as a dry hole.³⁰

Although the volume of oil taken from the ground in Ness County is small in comparison with other oil producing counties, it does constitute a valuable addition to the income of the county. There are

²⁹ The Bazine Leader, March 15, 1889.

³⁰ The Ness County News, October 27, 1949.

four known deposits of oil in the county. One small pool is located near the village of Arnold; a second small pool is located about six miles south and east of Utica; a third small pool is about six miles south of Beeler; and the Aldrich pool, the principal oil producing area in Ness County, is located several miles northwest of Ness City.

The income from the production of oil is about \$700,000 annually to say nothing of the amount paid in lease money. Not all of Ness County has been explored for oil and new deposits may be found which will increase the wealth of the county.

Manufacturing

Today we know that the economy of Ness County is primarily agrarian but the early urban residents envisioned great industrial growth for their cities. The general feeling among the residents may be illustrated by the following article from The Graphic.

No county in the state contains within her boarders more of the natural elements requisite to the building up of a city like Wichita, or Salina, or Emporia or Fort Scott, or any good inland city than does Ness County. No county's soil is richer, water better, people more diverse in their nativity, bringing with them the various methods and experiences of their several localities; no section is better supplied with building stone of a superior quality, no new county can truthfully boast of more or better improvements, made in a shorter time, than can Ness County; and no county is more favorably situated geographically to build up and maintain a metropolis of some importance in the West.³¹

This was not just a bit of propaganda designed to influence the easterner. The local population believed this to be true and they were willing and even anxious to invest their money so that they might

³¹ The Graphic, May 15, 1886.

be well established and enjoy a substantial profit in the new metropolis. It was a lucky thing for the residents that, in most cases, manufacturing had to wait on the railroads. This probably saved many an investor from financial loss.

As of this writing, there are no manufacturing enterprises in the county. Past manufacturing industries include the Ness City Roller Mill, built in 1886, the Borthwick Roller Mill, established at Ness City in 1891 and the 4-S Razor Company, established in 1914 at Ness City.

There were lesser enterprises too. In 1886, Ness City had a "chimney factory," presided over by C. H. Lewis³² and, earlier in the history of the county, a gentleman by the name of Corning operated a "smut generator" in that city. The author has been unable to determine just what a smut generator is supposed to produce but several early newspapers make reference to Corning's establishment. It must be a rather disagreeable sort of occupation for, when The Ness County Pioneer erroneously reported that the smut generator would be operated by John Wood, the correction made was as follows: "The smut generator at Ness City is run by Corning; Wood is too nice a young man to run it without vomiting."³³ (This retraction was not intended to be a reflection upon the character of Corning but as an inference that John F. Wood lacked manly qualities. Frank Sheldon, publisher of the Sidney newspaper, was quite open in his condemnation of Wood,

³² The Ness County News, September 25, 1886.

³³ The Ness County Pioneer, July 26, 1880.

Ness City's first male school teacher and a strong campaigner for Ness City during the county seat fight. It is also interesting to note that toward the end of 1880, The Ness County Pioneer was purchased by John F. Wood and its publication suspended.

The first flour mill in the county was the Ness City Roller Mill. The citizens of Ness City subscribed \$1,000 for the new enterprise which was built in 1886. The proprietors were John Snow and A. F. Kirberg and their miller was Edward Broom.³⁴

This first flour mill was small and not very efficient but it was a needed and welcome venture and, at the time it was built, it was regarded as a fairly good mill. The importance of this mill may be illustrated by the following quotation:

Ness City boasts one of the finest flouring mills in the country. In fact this mill supplies the entire west end of the state, as it is the last this side of Colorado. It is no uncommon sight to see teams from eastern Colorado in Ness City to do milling.³⁵

The mill was moved to Ransom in the early part of 1892 after the more modern Borthwick Roller Mill was erected at Ness City. The mill was closed just before the turn of the century.

George Borthwick and F. C. Borthwick established the Borthwick Roller Mill at Ness City in 1891. The mill was sold to the Ness City Mill, Light and Ice Company in 1899 and was in operation as a mill, ice and electric plant until it burned in June, 1911.³⁶

³⁴ The Ness County News, July 25, 1940.

³⁵ The Topeka Daily Capital, September 13, 1889.

³⁶ The Ness County News, May 30, 1940.

The most outstanding example of early Ness County enterprise was the building of the Ness County Sugar Mill. At that time, sugar cane ranked with corn as one of the principal crops of Kansas and the Ness County Sugar Mill Company, which was organized in the spring of 1889, intended to make Ness City the sugar capital of the world. The mill, which was built in 1889 and 1890, was the largest sugar processing plant in the world.

One familiar with the history of Ness City will see in this enterprise the guiding hand of Mr. N. C. Merrill. Merrill was an entrepreneur who believed in doing things in a grand way. Merrill's Ness County Bank advertised a capital of \$500,000 (about one-fourth was paid in), by far the largest in the county, and the building which he had built to house the bank was the finest in the county. Such an enterprise would be a giant undertaking for a wealthy man, but Merrill, by his own statement, started the Ness County Bank "without a dollar and a thousand dollars in debt."³⁷ N. C. Merrill was also president of the Merrill Trust Company.

The Ness County Sugar Mill Company was organized with a paid up capital stock of \$150,000. The townships of Center and Franklin and the city of Ness City each voted to purchase \$25,000 worth of Sugar Mill Bonds based on the ability of the mill to make a certain amount of sugar per day.³⁸

³⁷ N. C. Merrill, Letter, October 4, 1887. (Property of Mrs. Grace Beardslee, Ness City, Kansas.)

³⁸ The Ness County News, May 30, 1946.

The gigantic operation made news throughout the country. The following item from The Topeka Daily Capital provides one of the best descriptions available.

. . . Early last spring the business men conceived the idea of building a sorghum sugar mill, and set about the task at once. A company was organized with a paid up capital stock of \$150,000 composed almost entirely of home capitalists. Work was done as soon as possible, and today Ness City has the largest sorghum sugar factory in the world.

The main building and engine room are somewhat apart, having a total length of 242 feet, and being 50 feet wide and from 2 to 5 stories high. The machinery is propelled by a 1,000 horse power engine, run with steam, generated by seven large boilers. The machinery is the largest ever employed in making sorghum sugar, having a capacity of 340 tons of cane per day.

As soon as the sugar works gets under good headway the company intends adding other industries and improvements in keeping with the enterprising city. Among them will be first a paper mill to utilize the cane chips; water works and electric light plants, all of which can be operated by the sugar works engine.³⁹

By 1890, everything was ready to go and some sugar had been made on a test basis. The year 1890, however, was not the kind of year conducive to the growth of sugar cane and there was not as much available as the backers of the mill had hoped for. As it turned out, that really didn't make any difference because on August 23, 1890, before production could get underway, the mill went up in smoke.

The cry went up that the mill had been set on fire so Mr. Merrill could realize about \$100,000 on the insurance. The company had intended to keep that amount of insurance on the mill as the mortgage required but the insurance companies were continually cancelling the policies and new ones were being procured as fast as possible and no

³⁹ The Topeka Daily Capital, September 13, 1889.

one seemed to know how much was in force at any given time. It made little difference as to the amount because it was all carried by wild-cat companies. They charged that the fire had been set and refused to pay. Apparently, little effort was made to force collection.⁴⁰

As to whether the fire was set, Jake Spidel was the watchman at the plant at the time of the fire and he openly claimed that Mr. Merrill hired him to burn the mill and that he did so. Spidel was never prosecuted and neither was Merrill so the question of guilt, if any exists, is still open and there are many opinions.⁴¹

The 4-S Razor Company, which was established by V. T. Miller in 1914, produced a workable safety razor. The razor, which was the patented invention of Mr. Miller, was an ordinary straight edge razor fitted with a removable guard. The razor was stropped in the same way as an ordinary straight edge razor but the guard provided increased safety and easier shaving in the same manner as the modern safety razor.

On December 12, 1915, The Kansas City Journal reported that "the present output is 1,000 razors per week, and an extension will soon be made that will enable the plant to turn out as much as 100,000 razors per year."⁴² These plans, however, were never realized, for the modern safety razor forced the firm out of business in 1918.

⁴⁰ The Ness County News, May 30, 1946.

⁴¹ Loc. cit.

⁴² The Kansas City Journal, December 12, 1915.

Banking in Ness County

So far as is known, nothing in writing exists to be used as a guide to the early banks of the county and material had to be gleaned from newspapers on file at the State Historical Library in Topeka. These early publications seemed to show a suprising indifference toward new businesses and the opening of a new bank was often reported in no more than two or three lines.

Outside of Ness City newspaper coverage was even less complete and, as a result, the banking picture in the smaller towns is not as comprehensive as that of the county seat. Since the early banks were not required to keep records, there is no way to check whether the information herein contained is complete and it is quite possible that some short lived banks may have existed in various communities and been forgotten with their passing.

To assemble this information has not been an easy task. It was found necessary to examine every newspaper issued in the county for any important happenings relating to banks and that, of course, was not an easy task. It was then necessary to integrate this material with the times and present it in readable form. For much of the information herein contained and for background material, the author is indebted to Mr. O. J. Weir, president of the First State Bank of Ness City.

Ness City Banks

By 1885, Ness City was growing rapidly but there was still no railroad and there were no banks. The nearest bank was probably at

Larned; at least, that seems to have been the place where the Ness City people did their banking.

The first attempt to establish a bank in Ness City was written up very formally in The Ness County News of May 28, 1885, as follows:

At short notice last Tuesday afternoon, about forty citizens assembled at Bell's Furniture room to take under consideration the advisability of establishing a bank at this place in conformity with the state laws relating for [to] such matters. Propositions were made by Messers. J. Linn, president of the Halstead Bank and also Mr. King of the Halstead Bank. An informal subscription was taken resulting in the taking of ninety shares of par value \$50.00 while Mr. Linn and Mr. King of the Halstead Bank subscribed for six hundred shares of like value, under certain restrictions. The total capital of the bank is represented by one thousand shares of \$50.00 each. After considerable sparring over minor legal points involved, the meeting adjourned to meet again Wednesday evening to hear the report of the committee appointed to solicit further subscriptions of the capital stock.⁴³

At Wednesday's meeting, May 29, 1885, Mr. N. C. Merrill, a young man who had resided in the county for six years but had important connections in the East, proposed taking the place of the men from the Halstead Bank. This proposal of Merrill's "seemed to throw a wet blanket over the meeting and although discussions proceeded to a late hour, the meeting broke up without accomplishing anything except to show the need of a bank."⁴⁴

Nothing more came of these meetings and the next mention of banking appeared in the June 27, 1885 issue of The Ness County News as follows:

A Bank at Last--Messers Fred and George Borthwick of Iowa arrived in our city this week with a full banking outfit and are

⁴³ The Ness County News, May 28, 1885.

⁴⁴ The Ness County News, June 5, 1885.

now busily engaged in putting in order the fine new room which they have secured on Court Street, preparatory to opening up a general business. A fine large safe with burglar proof chest and time lock has been put in position and has the appearance of being a very secure place wherein to deposit any surplus capital with which our business men and farmers may be troubled. They are affable young gentlemen and come into our midst with the intention of becoming permanent fixtures, and have ample capital at their command to accomodate all persons who may desire to borrow money.⁴⁵

Thus was reported the establishment of the Borthwick bank under the name of the Bank of Ness City with F. C. Borthwick as president and George Borthwick as cashier. The date on which the Bank of Ness City opened is not recorded but Mr. George Borthwick, who at the age of ninety-five still resides in Ness City, has stated that to the best of his recollection he and Mr. Merrill, who started the Ness County Bank, had an agreement that both banks were to open on the first day of July, 1885.

The Bank of Ness City operated as a private bank, having neither state nor national charter, until January, 1889, when it applied for and received a state charter.⁴⁶ The Borthwick bank continued to operate under the name of the Bank of Ness City even after it became a state chartered bank.

No public statement of the bank was made during the time it operated as a private bank as none was required. It's first published statement appeared in The Ness County News of July 27, 1889, and showed the bank's condition as of July 1, 1889.

⁴⁵ The Ness County News, June 27, 1885.

⁴⁶ The Ness County News, January 12, 1889.

The first statement of the Bank of Ness City follows:⁴⁷

Loans	\$34,863.60
Office Furniture	12,000.00
Overdrafts	435.25
Capital (paid in)	41,750.00
Interest & Exchange	18.88
Dividend Account	1,744.50
Deposits	14,422.30

Another bank came into being along with the Bank of Ness City.

The first newspaper mention of it appeared in The Ness County News of July 4, 1885. N. C. Merrill, the young man who earlier had tried to take the place of the Halstead bankers, established the bank under the name of the Ness County Bank.⁴⁸ It was also a private bank and remained such until it received a state charter in March, 1889.⁴⁹ N. C. Merrill was cashier and later president.

The fine building which housed this bank was planned in 1888. Five architect firms figured on the plans and Merrill, who didn't believe in doing things in a small way, chose the one resulting in the present structure. The building now houses the Ness City Post Office but the bank's name may still be seen carved above the entrance.

The capital of the bank was the largest Ness City has ever seen. Advertisements showed: Authorized Capital, \$500,000; Subscribed Capital, \$250,000; and Paid In Capital, \$125,000.

The years 1885, 1886, 1887 and 1888 were notable years for Ness City. These were the boom years and the greatest building years Ness

⁴⁷ The Ness County News, July 27, 1889.

⁴⁸ The Ness County News, July 4, 1885.

⁴⁹ The Ness County News, March 30, 1889.

City has ever seen. The town was growing rapidly and people from the East were willing to invest heavily in Ness County land and enterprise. So, the top-heavy capital of this bank was with an eye to the future, just to be sure to be in on the ground floor.

Along with this movement came Ness City's third bank, organized April 27, 1886, under the name of the State Bank of Ness City and with an advertised capital of \$100,000. The first officers were B. F. Hermon, president; O. H. Laraway, vice president; and Charles E. Clarkson, cashier.⁵⁰ This was the first chartered bank, and in its advertising made much of being owned entirely by local people.

The advertised capital of all these banks bore little resemblance to the amounts actually paid in. This bank, in its first published statement (January, 1887), showed capital paid in of \$20,500.⁵¹ By July, 1887, the paid in capital amounted to \$25,000.⁵²

On June 25, 1886, the First National Bank of Ness City was organized, thus making four banks, two private banks and two with charters, one a state and the other a national charter, all doing business at the same time in Ness City. The First National Bank was organized by the First National Bank of Larned and the first president was J. W. Rush, the president of the First National Bank at Larned. Charles L. Rogers was the cashier. The First National Bank advertised

⁵⁰ The Ness County News, May 1, 1886.

⁵¹ The Ness County News, January 8, 1887.

⁵² The Ness County News, July 9, 1887.

a capital of \$50,000 and all of their published statements showed that amount actually paid in.⁵³

Until 1890 these banks all did a substantial business. The Ness County Bank seemed to have strong connections in the East and advertised an eastern office in Boston (Merrill's old home town), Simmons Building, 40 Water Street, with A. E. Alvord as manager. In one of their circulars they gave the following description of Ness City.

Ness City, the flourishing capital of Ness County, is on the Chicago, Kansas & Western Railroad, an extension of the Santa Fe (soon to be made the through line to Denver) and the Denver, Memphis & Atlantic (now building, September 1887). Four other roads have been surveyed and are contemplated at an early day. With such unsurpassed railroad facilities practically assured, Ness City is destined to be the metropolis of Western Kansas.

All branches of business are represented, and every business is prosperous. Substantial stone buildings are being erected in all parts of the city. It has an Opera House, system of water-works, Board of Trade, four banks, elegant schoolhouses, churches, etc.

The population has trebled in the past sixteen months, and is now increasing faster than ever. Town lots that two years ago could be purchased for forty or fifty dollars are now sold at \$1,000.00 and \$1,200.00. Ness City is the rising city of Western Kansas.⁵⁴

The Bank of Ness City had connections with investors in Iowa, Missouri and Eastern Kansas, and the First National Bank was able to extend accommodations to its customers through the bank at Larned and others. As long as the banks could make good commissions on outside business and lend money locally at the high rates then common, they

⁵³ The Ness County News, June 26, 1886.

⁵⁴ The Ness County Bank, Circular, September, 1887 (Property of the Ness County Historical Society, Ness City, Kansas).

could get along very nicely. Just how profitable these years were may be illustrated by the following letter written October 4, 1887, by N. C. Merrill of the Ness County Bank. The letter is in long hand.

I am 32 years old. I started the Ness County Bank in 1885, July 1st, without a \$ and in debt about \$1000. Honesty and the confidence the people had in us we have succeeded in doing the bulk of business. I own South $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 17, north of town. Several lots in town and have made \$20,000 in $2\frac{1}{2}$ years out of banking. 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ per month is our rates of interest.⁵⁵

When the depression came, the Bank of Ness City, the Borthwick bank, was the first to go. It closed its doors on June 24, 1893.⁵⁶ In time, the bank paid its depositors in full and the Borthwicks were held sufficiently blameless by the banking department that George A. Borthwick was made receiver.

The next change in the banking picture came on July 15, 1893, when the First National Bank absorbed the State Bank of Ness City.⁵⁷ In quick order followed the closing of the Ness County Bank, Merrill's bank. The closing of this bank was announced in The Ness County News of July 29, 1893, just a little more than a month after the closing of the Bank of Ness City. It also paid its deposits in full.

A sort of successor to the Ness County Bank was formed the day that bank closed. This was the Ness County State Bank, with a capital of \$25,000 and with J. F. McKinney as cashier. Only \$15,000

⁵⁵ N. C. Merrill, Letter, October 4, 1887. (Property of Mrs. Grace Beardslee, Ness City, Kansas.)

⁵⁶ The Ness County News, July 1, 1893.

⁵⁷ The Ness County News, July 29, 1893.

of the capital was actually paid in.⁵⁸ This left two banks in Ness City; the Ness County State Bank and the First National Bank.

The financial pressure continued and, in 1896, caused still another change. The First National Bank quit business as such and the First State Bank was organized with O. H. Laraway as president and Charles Rogers, cashier of the First National Bank, was made cashier of the new state bank. Undoubtedly the officers of the First National Bank at Larned found \$50,000 too much to leave in Ness City and probably needed it elsewhere.

The new First State Bank had a proposed capital of \$10,000 of which only \$7,000 was paid in. The First State Bank and the Ness County State Bank continued to be the only banks until January 8, 1898, when the First State Bank took over the Ness County State Bank, leaving only one bank in Ness City. But this did not continue long, for, on August 22, 1898, the Citizens State Bank was opened for business with J. C. Hopper as president. He served a short term as cashier of the Ness County State Bank when J. F. McKinney retired, just before that institution was taken over by the First State Bank. John Engel, then County Treasurer, was to be cashier as soon as his term should expire. Mrs. Estella Platt acted as cashier until that time.

On October 5, 1898, the First State Bank published its statement showing a capital of \$7,000 and deposits of \$36,172. The Citizens State Bank published its statement on the same date, showing deposits of \$14,150.85 and a capital of \$7,000.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The Ness County News, July 29, 1893.

⁵⁹ The Ness County News, October 5, 1898.

These two banks were closely identified with the growth of the town and community up to and through the First World War. Both banks changed from state to national banks in 1906 and, on September 1, 1910, the Citizens National Bank showed deposits of \$225,155.32 and National Bank of Ness City (formerly the First State Bank) showed deposits of \$109,746.03.⁶⁰

On June 30, 1919, the National Bank of Ness City had deposits of \$272,654.69 and the Citizens National Bank had deposits of \$502,858.67.⁶¹ The slump in commodity prices following the First World War caused trouble for the Citizens National Bank and it was taken over by the National Bank of Ness City on December 17, 1921.⁶²

The National Bank of Ness City continued to operate as the sole bank in Ness City until the depression of the thirties. The bank failed to reopen after the Bank Holiday except for a short time under a conservator. It was finally closed for liquidation during the early part of 1934.

The First State Bank moved from Beeler to Ness City on August 7, 1933 and thus became the seventh bank to operate in Ness City. This bank has served the community under the leadership of O. J. Weir to the present date. The capital of the bank is \$25,000 and it boasts the greatest volume of deposits of any bank in Ness County. Mr. L. A. Krug is the cashier.

⁶⁰ The Ness County News, September 1, 1910.

⁶¹ The Ness County News, June 30, 1919.

⁶² The Ness County News, December 19, 1921.

Beeler

The First State Bank was established by O. J. Weir and opened its doors for business on August 15, 1916 with a capital of \$25,000. As the name implies, it was a state bank and was chartered on July 15, 1916. When the National Bank of Ness City failed, leaving Ness City without a bank, the First State Bank was moved to Ness City and opened for business at its new location on August 7, 1933.

Utica

The early history of the banks at Utica is extremely vague and much more research is needed before a complete picture of banking in that community can be presented.

There were only about 75 inhabitants in Utica in 1900 but the local paper, The Enterprise, reported at that time that "Utica will have a private bank with Paul Klein as president."⁶³ The editor of The Enterprise was also Paul Klein so he should be in a position to know. What happened to this bank is not known. It may have had a short life; it may not have existed at all; or it may have been the forerunner of the Citizens State Bank of Utica which was chartered in 1903.

When chartered, the Citizens State Bank of Utica had a capital of \$12,000 and operates today with that amount. The bank is the second oldest bank in the county and ranks fourth in deposits among the six banks in the county.

⁶³ The Enterprise, January 6, 1900.

Sometime after 1910, a group of businessmen at Utica, being displeased with the policies of the Citizens State Bank, opened a rival bank under the name of the Utica State Bank. The bank closed after four or five years and its assets and liabilities were assumed by the Citizens State Bank of Utica.

Ransom

Ransom, with a population of less than four hundred inhabitants, is the only town in Ness County with more than one bank. The First State Bank of Ransom is the oldest bank in Ness County. It was chartered in August, 1900, with a capital of \$5,000. Joseph Shellenberger was president and Charles L. Rogers was cashier. (This is the same Charles L. Rogers who had previously served as cashier of the First National Bank and the First State Bank of Ness City.) The exact day the bank opened for business is not positively known but the golden anniversary of this bank was celebrated on September 19.

The capital of the bank was increased to \$10,000 on January 5, 1904, and was increased to \$35,000 on April 3, 1917. This paid in capital is greater than that of any other bank in Ness County.

In spite of the fact that there are two banks in Ransom and another bank in Arnold, just six miles away, the First State Bank has deposits exceeding one million dollars and rates third in the county in that respect.

The other Ransom bank, the Farmers State Bank, is the newest bank in the county, having received its charter in 1920. The first

few years were difficult years for this bank but, under the leadership of Mr. Charles Shellenberger, the bank has prospered and assumed a sound financial footing. The Farmers State Bank has deposits nearly equal to that of the Citizens State Bank of Utica and ranks fifth among the banks of the county in that respect. The building housing the bank is one of the finest and is the only air conditioned bank building in the county.

Bazine

The first bank in Bazine was established in 1888 under the name of the Bank of Bazine. It was a private bank, published no statements, and its span of life is uncertain. Newspaper coverage of the early happenings in Bazine is very incomplete and the fate of this bank is not known. The bank probably failed during the depression of the early nineties when Bazine had no local newspaper to report its passing.

The present Bazine bank, the Bazine State Bank, was established in 1909. The president of the bank is W. A. Brenner and the cashier is B. F. Scheuerman. The bank has a capital of \$25,000 and deposits second only to the First State Bank at Ness City in amount.

Brownell

The Brownell State Bank was chartered in April, 1908, with a capital of \$10,000. Information indicates that the loan policies of this bank were never very sound and it was frequently in danger of collapse. The bank was liquidated during 1931 and 1932 with the assets

and liabilities being divided among the two Ransom banks and the bank at McCracken in Rush County.

Arnold

The smallest bank in Ness County by way of deposits is the Arnold State Bank. The bank was chartered in 1910 with a capital of \$10,000 and that is the amount subscribed today.

Public Utilities: Electricity and Gas

The Western Light and Telephone Company supplies electric power to all of the urban districts and some rural areas and R. E. A. lines provide power for most of the remaining farms in Ness County. Ness City and Bazine are the only towns in Ness County served by natural gas. The gas is purchased from the Western Light and Telephone Company.

Water

Ness City, Ransom, Utica and Bazine all have an adequate supply of water furnished by their respective municipal water works. The smaller communities rely on water pumped from shallow wells and no serious water shortage has developed in recent years.

Telephones

The towns of Bazine and Ness City are served by the Western Light and Telephone Company while Beeler, Brownell, Ransom and Utica have their own mutual organizations. Telephone service and equipment

in these smaller towns is often disgusting to people who are used to the facilities of larger systems. The central exchanges all have hours when they will be open (usually from 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. as determined at subscriber meetings) and only emergency calls are handled after closing hours. For a time it was the practice of these exchanges to close Sunday afternoons as well but, at the present writing, this practice has been universally discontinued.

The operator, or manager, is hired on a contract basis and there have been many managers. The manager's duties include everything from switchboard operator to lineman and accountant.

These local exchanges first appeared in 1901 and were extended throughout the county by 1905. Their official names have been changed many times and their affiliation with each other seems to be a rather nebulous thing. Their chief asset is that they do provide a less expensive service to their patrons than that of larger companies.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Volumes have been written about the "average" or "typical" farmer-- what he does; what he wants; what he thinks; etc. Charts and graphs are prepared and circulated so that the farmer who is not "average" may take the steps necessary to associate himself with that group.

The Ness County farmer might well be called "average" when speaking of living conditions in Kansas. Statistics based upon farm improvements show Ness County to be the "typical" county in that respect.¹ Of course, the "average" Kansas farmer is substantially above the nationwide "average" farmer and crop conditions will determine to a great extent just how the farmers will live in the future.

From 1940 to the present time, the income of the Ness County farmer has been greater than ever before and the county has prospered as a result. There are more automobiles in the county than ever before. In 1939, there were 4.1 persons to each automobile; in 1949, there were 2.8 persons to each automobile; and in 1950, that ratio was reduced to 2.7 persons to one automobile.²

This increased prosperity may be seen in other ways. Ness City has voted bonds for a Municipal Hospital with work to begin soon, and the existing hospital at Ransom has been recently enlarged. A beautiful

¹ Robert S. Eckley, Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1953), X, p. 42.

² Ibid., p. 18.

new Methodist church was erected at Ness City and a fine new Lutheran church has been built at Bazine. At the present time, construction is underway on a new grade school building at Ransom and a vocational agricultural building at Bazine.

There has been a need for a hospital at Ness City as the present Grissell Memorial Hospital at Ransom is inadequate. This hospital was opened by Dr. Grissell in 1928; Dr. Grissell having been the local doctor and pharmacist since 1899. The hospital lacks modern operating facilities and, unless it is an emergency, operations are performed at other hospitals outside the county. It is reported that, when built, the hospital at Ness City will provide the finest of surgical needs.

The Grissell Memorial Hospital was presented to the community of Ransom in 1936 and has been operated since that time under a cooperative plan. The hospital receives part of its support from the sale of hospital certificates, a form of local hospital insurance, which entitles the holder to hospital care in case of illness.

In 1886, The Graphic of Ness City boasted that in no other county are the "people more diverse in their nativity, bringing with them the various methods and experiences of their several localities."³ This statement probably covers too much territory to be strictly true, but it does indicate that the nativity of the Ness County settlers was quite varied. A check of the churches at Ness City, Bazine or Ransom provides an indication as to the varied social backgrounds of the residents. There is a church in Ransom and Bazine for every eighty residents of

³ The Graphic, May 15, 1886.

the communities and a total of eleven different creeds are represented. No one religion dominates any section of the county and there are no major groups or "settlements" of people from the same foreign extraction. Several families of German-Catholic extraction settled near Ness City but, as a minority group they have, in general, adopted the English language and American customs. A large Menonite group settled in the area between Ransom and Utica but they do not practice the more stringent regulations so often associated with that religion. A group of Adventists settled in the Bazine area and maintain a school in that community. An Adventist church may be found in Ness City as well as Bazine.

In Ness County, no one church group is in the majority; no one nationality dominates the population. The county has been a true "melting pot" for varied cultural and social backgrounds. This diffusion of cultures has produced a population that is informed and tolerant of the beliefs of others.

Schools

Most of the information contained in this section is from the unpublished thesis of Charles G. Wolfe, "The Evolution of Educational Opportunities in Ness County, Kansas." For those interested in a more comprehensive picture of the Ness County schools, the author recommends this thesis. It is obtainable at the Fort Hays Kansas State College Library.

The first concern of the pioneers, after establishing some sort of shelter, was the education of their children. The first schools

were held wherever a vacant room or building could be located. Usually the first schoolhouses were "soddies" or dugouts. The early teachers were individuals of the female sex, unmarried and who happened to have the bare essentials of the three R's. There were no qualifications, as such, for the teacher until later years.

The curriculum of the early schools was usually determined by the teacher, depending upon the scope of her education or experiences. The school term seldom, if ever, lasted more than a few months. The reimbursement of the early teacher was from subscription--the parents were usually assessed one dollar or more for each child in school. Many of these subscription schools existed as late as the early 1900's. The first district organized was in 1879 and by 1899, all of the land in Ness County had been organized into districts with a peak of 74 organized districts in that year.

It was about this time that the people of the county became conscious of the shortcomings of their schools, and there began a movement for better schools, better qualified teachers, longer terms of school, and an enlarged curriculum. The Ness County Teachers' Association was formed in 1889, its purpose being to further the means of education in the county. The first Normal Institute of Ness County was held in 1884 under the direction of Superintendent Carpenter.

There had been considerable agitation over a period of years for a reduction in the number of organized school districts but by the end of 1945, there were still 69 districts in the county. Under the Reorganization Laws of 1945 and 1947, the number of districts was reduced to sixteen, which is the number of organized districts at present.

The establishment of the first high school in Ness County was at Ness City in 1887. The other towns of Ness County established their high schools at later dates, with Arnold being the latest in 1921. The early offerings of the high schools were quite meager, usually increasing as the number of pupils increased. The first high schools of the county followed a rather traditional course, as did other high schools all over the country. These rather narrow and traditional courses served one main purpose, that of preparing students for college. It was not until after the turn of the century that the curriculum was broadened sufficiently to benefit those students not desiring to go to college. Today, all of the high schools offer such practical courses as home economics, manual training, and commerce. The high schools at Bazine and Ness City also offer a course in vocational agriculture.

The schools of Ness County, with the exception of Ness City and Bazine, are hampered in their curriculum offerings because of a scarcity of students and lack of funds from an all to small school district. Beeler, with a high school enrollment that seldom exceeds forty-five pupils, is located fifteen miles west of Ness City. Some parents are, at the present time, sending their children to the Ness City High School where a greater variety of courses is offered. In the northern section of the county there are four high schools, having a combined enrollment about equal to that of the Ness City high school, located within a radius of thirteen miles. These towns are: Brownell, enrollment about the same as Beeler and located just ten miles east of Ransom with an enrollment of about sixty in their high school; Arnold, with an enrollment of about twenty is located just six miles west of Ransom; and Utica,

with an enrollment in the forties is located just thirteen miles from the centrally located town of Ransom. The small towns themselves provide the main stumbling block toward a program of consolidation. They seem to fear losing some of their autonomy, which is in itself a quite pertinent argument, for the schools seem to be the last string holding several of these small towns together.

Newspapers

Much research has gone into the preparation of this section. A careful check of the newspapers on file at the Kansas State Historical Library for dates of publication, owner's names, etc., resulted in most of the facts herein contained. Some additional information was obtained from the book entitled "History of Kansas Newspapers" by William E. Connelley.⁴ A third source was an article in The Ness County News⁵ which gave an interesting, but quite inaccurate, picture of the early newspapers of the county. As a final source, the early newspapers themselves were checked for items relating to other papers in the county. Some additional information was uncovered in this way.

Evidence indicates that additional short-lived newspapers were published in the county. In the early days it was not uncommon for a person to publish a paper for a month or two and then pack his belongings and move on. Since this practice was not uncommon, the name of

⁴ William E. Connelley, History of Kansas Newspapers (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1916), p. 253.

⁵ The Ness County News, May 30, 1940.

the editor and the newspaper itself is soon forgotten. One such paper is known to have been published at Ransom and another at Utica.

Although the following history of the newspapers of Ness County is not complete and additional information might be uncovered, the author feels that, at the present time, it presents a more complete and comprehensive picture of the newspapers of Ness County than can be derived from any single source.

A word should be said of the method used in presenting this data. It did not seem practical to list the early newspapers and discuss each one separately as there were several changes of name and some mergers with new publications being formed. To attempt to list the newspapers according to the town in which they were published is also impractical as several of the early sheets were published at two or more places. The best approach seemed to be to present the newspapers according to the date of first publication, taking each newspaper as it appeared and tracing its history to the time when it was suspended. When a newspaper changed its name or when two publications merged, it seemed best to deviate from this plan and continue with the history of the new publication. As The Ness County News is the only paper being published in Ness County today, the discussion of that paper is presented last rather than according to the date it was founded.

Ness County has had no daily paper and all of the papers discussed are weekly papers unless otherwise stated. To avoid possible confusion, the names of the publications will not be underlined where those names appear in the following section.

History

The first newspaper, The Ness County Pioneer, was established at Clarinda on May 10, 1879, by Frank Sheldon. The paper was moved to Sidney in September of 1879 where Mr. Sheldon continued to edit it until late 1880 when it was purchased by John F. Wood who suspended its publication.

When The Ness County Pioneer was moved from Clarinda to Sidney, the owner of the general store at Clarinda, Mr. N. C. Merrill, established a paper under the name of The Walnut Valley Times which he continued to publish until June 24, 1880, when he sold it to John F. Wood who transferred it to Ness City and renamed it The Ness City Times. Wood published the Times until 1891 before selling it to J. K. Barnd, owner of The Ness County News, who suspended its publication.

The Advance was established at Sidney on February 9, 1882 and was edited by "silver tongue" Corning. The paper lasted until April 21, 1883 when it was taken over by Joseph Langellier who moved the paper to Ness City and changed its name to The Truth.

Another of Joseph Langellier's papers was The Schoharie Globe. This paper was originally named The Globe and was first published at Cyrus but was moved to Schoharie sometime later and renamed The Schoharie Globe. The earliest issue of this paper on file at the Kansas Historical Library is that of July 7, 1883. This paper is the sixteenth issue of volume three and indicates that the paper first appeared in 1880.

On April 11, 1885, the first issue of Joseph Langellier's The Sixteenth Amendment appeared at Ness City. The paper was the consolidation

of The Truth and The Schoharie Globe. Langelier was an ardent prohibitionist and his new paper was devoted to that cause. At the time, liquor could be obtained from drug stores by "prescription" and anyone wanting a bottle, or bottles, need merely sign their name to the register and pay the price. Joseph Langelier became very unpopular with the imbibing element of Ness City by publishing the names of those who purchased liquor and the amount purchased. Resentment grew with each issue as Mr. Langelier continued to publish the names of the Ness City drinking element on the front page of his paper in spite of frequent threats and verbal abuse. His newspaper career had a sudden ending in Ness County for a mid-night mob overturned his office and deposited most of his printing equipment in Sunset Lake. The last issue of this paper was made on November 17, 1885.

The Western Central Kansas Cowboy made its appearance at Sidney on September 1, 1883. The paper was edited by "Colonel Jack" S. S. Prouty and was backed by the cattle interests in the vicinity. Late in 1884 the paper was moved to Dodge City where it was destroyed by fire a few years later.

The Graphic was a short-lived sheet established at Ness City by Wooden Brothers on or about March 20, 1886, with L. J. H. Wooden as editor and manager. The paper perished before the end of the year, publishing its last issue on October 30.

The Nonchalanta Herald, edited by H. C. Notson, was first issued on May 20, 1887. The Herald was the only paper ever printed at Nonchalanta. Publication was discontinued in 1889.

The Harold Boomer made its appearance on April 14, 1887, with Robert Findlay as editor. The last issue of this paper was on September 15 of the same year, but, just one week later on September 22, 1887, The Harold Record made its appearance under McHugh and Ball. This indicates that The Harold Boomer had been purchased and the name changed to The Harold Record. The Record was discontinued in 1889.

The first paper published at Bazine was The Bazine Register. It made its debut on February 17, 1887 with Morris and Son as owner and publisher. The paper was succeeded by The Bazine Banner with F. N. Newhouse as owner and editor on June 29, 1888. Only seven issues of The Bazine Banner were published when the paper was suspended on August 10, 1888.

Bazine was without a newspaper until February 15, 1889 when Miss Dora A. White established The Bazine Leader. Miss White thereby gained the distinction of being the first woman to edit a newspaper in Ness County even though her publication did not last long. The last issue of this paper appeared on August 16, 1889.

The Walnut Valley Sentinel was the only Democratic paper in the county. It was launched by McDowell and Weisell at Ness City on June 15, 1886. A short time later, the paper was sold to John Brown who continued to publish it until December 26, 1892 when it was acquired by Richard "Colonel Dick" Hathaway and the name changed to The Ness City Sentinel. Publication of the Sentinel was suspended in 1893.

On October 19, 1892, "Colonel Dick" Hathaway launched a little sheet at Ness City called The Lance. Publication of this paper was discontinued December 21, 1892 when Hathaway secured The Walnut Valley Sentinel.

The next newspaper to appear was The Ness County Echo. The Echo, a Populist paper, published its first issue in March, 1893, with Matthew Pemberton as owner and editor. Several years later, Pemberton was forced to retire due to failing health and the paper was leased to J. C. Lohnes who later purchased the sheet. Mr. Lohnes disposed of the Echo to Rhodes and Knighton who operated it for a few years before Mr. Lohnes again became the owner. Publication was suspended in 1915.

The Ness County Republican, a factional sheet, was established for the avowed purpose of putting The Ness County News out of business. The Ness County Republican's chief complaint against the News was that, although the News claimed to be Republican, it showed Democratic leanings. The Ness County Republican struggled along for two years and then suspended publication.

In 1898, The Ness County Teachers' Association published a monthly periodical entitled The Common School Advocate which was "devoted to the cause of education and to Ness County schools particularly."⁶

In 1899, Paul Klein of Utica established The Enterprise. For a little over a year this paper was printed at Ness City by special arrangement with The Ness County News when it was found more convenient to have the work done at McCracken. The last issue of this paper on file at the Kansas Historical Society Library in Topeka is that of March 12, 1915. Evidence, however, indicates that this paper was not discontinued

⁶ The Common School Advocate, September, 1898.

but that the paper changed hands and the name was changed to the Utica Star-Courier. The Utica Star-Courier changed hands several times before being sold to The Ness County News by George and Buckman and its publication suspended in 1939.

A monthly publication, Every Day Religion, made its appearance at Ransom in 1889 but was moved to Kanopolis in Ellsworth County after the April, 1900 issue. This publication was discontinued in 1904.

Another Ransom paper, The Journal, published by Kendall and edited by Kingman, made its appearance on March 20, 1903. The publication lasted a year before being discontinued.

The Brownell Courier was the only newspaper published at Brownell. The paper was edited and published by Ray W. Ferrell from December 11, 1908 until it was discontinued in 1912.

The first issue of The Ransom Record was distributed on January 11, 1917 with Sam H. Barnd as editor. The paper was sold to J. N. See in 1921 who edited it until 1930 when it was sold to C. P. Dutton. After the death of Mr. Dutton, the paper was sold to Earl Strimple who returned it to Mrs. Dutton in 1934. The paper was suspended by The Ness County News in 1937. The News having purchased the remains following a disastrous fire which destroyed the building housing the paper.

The Bazine Advocate was established March 4, 1926 by Percy Torrey who sold the paper to J. N. See in 1930. Mr. See transferred the ownership to Carl Amick who passed it on to Edward and Leslie Stullken. In 1938 the paper was sold to The Ness County News and publication suspended.

The Ness County News is the only newspaper published in Ness County at the present time. The paper was launched at Ness City by J. K. Barnd and R. J. McFarland on November 22, 1884. Mr. McFarland severed his connections with the paper after about four years and the publication continued under the sole management of J. K. Barnd until June, 1919, when his son, Dick Barnd, became the papers business manager. The ownership of the paper was then listed as "J. K. Barnd and Son" and remained so until 1921 when it became "J. K. Barnd and Sons." Dick Barnd having become editor following the death of J. K. Barnd in October, 1920, and Sam Barnd being associated with the paper as business manager. In 1923, the paper was purchased by Bert Barnd who managed and edited the paper until January 1, 1935 when his son, Knox Barnd, became associated with his father. Bert Barnd died in February, 1935, and Knox Barnd continued the publication until February, 1936, when the paper was sold to W. F. Turrentine. Mr. Turrentine is the present owner of The Ness County News.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

The days when a bank can be established with nothing more than a good sales talk are over, for the government has established laws and standards designed to protect people's savings. These laws have made new ventures more difficult to establish and risk taking is now confined chiefly to those who are already well off and have little need to invest in dangerous undertakings. For, under our present day protective system, a person without capital cannot secure the money needed to participate in such a venture. Thus, the tendency to risk capital has been reduced by the government rather than by some intangible change on the part of the population. Recent speculation on the cattle market is evidence that the people of Ness County still possess the gambling traits of their forefathers and that the desire for a quick profit is not dead. If asked what they want most out of life, however, the vast majority would answer with the one word, "security."

Since the 1930's, the government has gone a long way along the road toward providing security for the farmers. There seems to be a tendency among the farmers of Ness County to distrust the government program of price supports. The farmers seem to be in agreement that support is fine but they object to the obvious second part of the program, that of acreage allotments. The objections raised by the farmers in this respect bring to mind a farmer the writer once knew during the depression of the thirties. He charged the government with Socialism

and Communism when the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed and, to the day he died, he continued to deride the government for interfering with the farmers' business. Still, he took part in the program and he cashed his government checks. As of this writing I have heard of no farmer in Ness County who has returned his government checks.

This era of government control is new and it is still too early to predict the outcome. The present trend, however, is toward more control over all phases of rural life.

The population of the county has remained relatively static for the past ten years, indicating that the county is now supporting a near maximum number of people. With modern machinery displacing more farm laborers each year, some additional urban enterprise must be established if Ness County is to increase in population without encountering an unemployment problem.

Nearly seventy-five years have passed since the county was organized in 1880. It has been an exciting time in which many changes have been wrought. Even more interesting and exciting times may lie ahead, with equally important developments taking place. Certainly no one knows what the future may hold and we must wait for it to unfold before many of our present day questions may be answered.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books, Pamphlets and Government Reports

Andreas, A. T., History of the State of Kansas. Chicago: A. T.

Andreas, 1883. 1616 pp.

Provides a good account of the first organization of Ness County. Other data is not reliable.

Blackmar, Frank W., Kansas, vol. 2. Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912.

A cyclopedia of state history. Provides a good account of the early history of Ness County.

Clark, Carroll D. and Roy L. Roberts, People of Kansas. Topeka, Kansas: The Kansas State Planning Board, 1936. 36 pp.

Information relative to the early settlers of Kansas.

Connelly, William E., History of Kansas, 5 vols. Chicago: American Historical Society, Inc., 1928.

Provides information relative to the severe depression of the early 1890's.

Connelly, William E., History of Kansas Newspapers. Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Plant, 1916. 373 pp.

Provides a list of the Ness County newspapers on file at the Kansas State Historical Library, Topeka, Kansas.

Eckley, Robert S., Economic Development in Southwestern Kansas, vol. 10.

Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1953. 31 pp.

Information on social conditions in Ness County.

Hammond World Atlas. New York: C. S. Hammond Company, 1953. 269 pp.

Source of information as to the towns shown on a modern map of Ness County.

Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Biennial Reports, 37 vols. Topeka,

Kansas: State Printing Office, 1880-1950.

Information relative to agricultural products and population.

Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Seventeenth Biennial Report.

Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1908.

Early notions as to crops adaptable to Kansas farming.

Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-second Biennial Report.

Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1920.

The grasshopper plague of 1874.

Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirty-seventh Biennial Report.

Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1950.

Source of information relative to the miles of improved highways in Ness County.

Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Report Number 285 of the State Board of Agriculture. Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1948.

Statistics on weather in Kansas.

Kansas State Historical Society, Kansas Historical Collections, vol. 12. Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1912.

Provides a colorful account of the county seat fight.

Lord, Russell, Men of Earth. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1931. 313 pp.

Provides an account of the hardships of the pioneer settler of the plains.

United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperating, Physical Land Conditions Affecting Use, Conservation, and Management of Land Resources, Ness County, Kansas. Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1948. 22 pp.

A good source of material relating to the land conditions of Ness County.

United States Department of the Interior, Statistics of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880). Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1883.

Growth of population in the United States by states, counties, cities and townships.

Webb, Walter Prescott, The Great Plains. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931. 525 pp.

Source of information relative to the early cattle trails in Kansas.

Thesis and Unpublished Research

Cole, David M., "Economic Trends in Western Kansas." Unpublished Research, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 1941.

Information on the economic activity of the county.

Wolfe, Charles G., "The Evolution of Educational Opportunities in Ness County, Kansas." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 1950. 116 pp.

An excellent source of information relative to the educational system of Ness County.

Circular

Ness County Bank, Circular, September, 1887. Property of the Ness County Historical Society, Ness County, Kansas.

Presents a glowing picture of Ness City.

Personal Letter

Merrill, N. C., Letter, October 4, 1887. Property of Mrs. Grace Beardslee, Ness City, Kansas.

Provides a colorful picture of early Ness City enterprise. A useful source of background material relating to the Ness County Bank at Ness City.

Newspapers

The Bazine Banner, June 29, 1888.

Railroad information.

The Bazine Banner, July 27, 1888.

Prospecting at Nonchalanta in Ness County.

The Bazine Leader, March 1, 1889.

Sugar factories in Kansas.

The Bazine Leader, March 15, 1889.

Contains an article relative to the discovery of coal near Bazine.

The Bazine Leader, March 22, 1889.

Information on early railroads.

The Common School Advocate, September, 1898.

This issue is on display in the Ness County Court House. Gives the purposes of the publication.

The Enterprise, January 6, 1900.

Information relative to the first bank at Utica.

The Graphic, May 15, 1886.

A description of Ness County.

The Graphic, August 14, 1886.

Railroad information.

The Harold Boomer, April 14, 1887.

Some proposed Ness County railroads.

The Harold Boomer, July 21, 1887.

Information on early railroads.

The Harold Record, September 15, 1887.

Lists the business establishments of Harold.

The Hutchinson News-Herald, May 31, 1953.

Provides statistics on the number of farms in Ness County.

The Kansas City Journal, December 12, 1915.

A report on the 4-S Razor Company at Ness City.

The Ness City Sentinel, January 7, 1893.

Proposed penalty for starting a prairie fire.

The Ness County News, May 28, 1885.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, June 5, 1885.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, June 27, 1885.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, July 4, 1885.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, May 1, 1886.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, June 26, 1886.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, September 18, 1886.

Contains an advertisement of the First National Bank at Larned relative to bank credit in Ness County.

The Ness County News, September 25, 1886.

The chimney factory of Mr. C. H. Lewis.

The Ness County News, January 8, 1887.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, July 9, 1887.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, January 12, 1889.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, March 30, 1889.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, July 27, 1889.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, July 1, 1893.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, July 29, 1893.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, March 19, 1898.

The last serious prairie fire in Ness County.

The Ness County News, October 5, 1898.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, September 1, 1910.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, June 30, 1919.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, March 7, 1920.

Early happenings in the village of Brownell.

The Ness County News, December 19, 1921.

Information relating to banking in Ness City.

The Ness County News, August 17, 1924.

Presents a brief history of the village of Beeler.

The Ness County News, August 17, 1929.

Information of the Santa Fe and Missouri Pacific Railroads.

The Ness County News, May 31, 1930.

Information relative to the prairie fire of 1878.

The Ness County News, March 9, 1935.

Tells of the most serious prairie fire in Ness County.

The Ness County News, August 17, 1939.

Presents a brief history of Bazine.

The Ness County News, May 30, 1940.

Contains articles on the Borthwick Roller Mill of Ness City and Ness County newspapers.

The Ness County News, July 25, 1940.

Tells of Ness City's first flour mill.

The Ness County News, May 30, 1946.

Presents an interesting account of the Ness County Sugar Mill.

The Ness County News, June 6, 1946.

A "History of Ness County" by Ellen Magire. Contains some errors.

The Ness County News, October 27, 1949.

Contains an article relating to the first oil well drilled in Ness County.

The Ness County News, March 5, 1953.

Table of rainfall, 1891-1952.

The Ness County Pioneer, August 16, 1879.

Railroad information and early mining activities.

The Ness County Pioneer, September 29, 1879.

The town of Sidney.

The Ness County Pioneer, October 20, 1879.

Early mining activity in Ness County.

The Ness County Pioneer, December 13, 1879.

Provides information about early transportation and communication in Ness County.

The Ness County Pioneer, March 27, 1880.

Contains information relative to the population of Ness County. The report is undoubtedly exaggerated.

The Ness County Pioneer, April 10, 1880.

Prospecting for coal at Ness City.

The Ness County Pioneer, May 3, 1880.

Information about the town of Sidney.

The Ness County Pioneer, May 17, 1880.

Presents a description of the campaign for the county seat of Ness County.

The Ness County Pioneer, June 7, 1880.

Tells of the results of the county seat election and charges bribery and fraud.

The Ness County Pioneer, July 5, 1880.

Gives information as to the population of Ness County. The figure given in this issue is within reason.

The Ness County Pioneer, July 26, 1880.

Contains a reference to the Corning "smut generator."

The Ness County Republican, September 23, 1896.

The organization of early fire companies.

The Nonchalanta Herald, July 21, 1887.

Railroad information.

The Nonchalanta Herald, August 5, 1887.

The purchase of a chemical fire engine at Ness City.

The Nonchalanta Herald, August 18, 1887.

Railroad information.

The Schoharie Globe, February 29, 1884.

Contains a reference to the voting of railroad bonds in Rice County and typifies the attitude of the editor toward the railroads.

The Sixteenth Amendment, April 11, 1885.

Railroad information.

The Topeka Daily Capital, September 13, 1889.

Contains an article on Ness City enterprise.

The Topeka Daily Capital, August 18, 1929.

Gives information relative to the Supreme Court decision upholding Ness City as the county seat of Ness County.

The Utica Star-Courier, July 14, 1932.

A short history of Utica.

The Walnut Valley Sentinel, July 31, 1886.

Early land values in Ness County and railroad information.

The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 7, 1886.

Gives a brief description of Sidney and Schoharie.

The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 14, 1886.

Gives a brief history of the growth of Ness City.

The Walnut Valley Sentinel, August 21, 1886.

Gives a brief history of the growth of Ness City.

The Walnut Valley Times, August 7, 1886.

Information relative to the county seat fight.

The Western Central Kansas Cowboy, September 1, 1883.

Reward offered for anyone maliciously setting fire to the range.